CHIEF CONTEMPORARY DRAMATISTS

Thomas H. Dickinson

SECOND SERIES

CHIEF CONTEMPORARY DRAMATISTS

Second Series

EIGHTEEN PLAYS FROM THE RECENT DRAMA OF ENGLAND, IRELAND, AMERICA, FRANCE, GERMANY AUSTRIA, ITALY, SPAIN, RUSSIA, AND SCANDINAVIA

SELECTED AND EDITED BY

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INTRODUCTION

This volume contains eighteen complete plays from the drama of England, Ireland, the United States, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, Russia, and the Scandinavian countries. Together with the first volume of *Chief Contemporary Dramatists*, issued in 1915, there are now made available in convenient form thirty-eight plays of the first order of excellence from the theater of Europe and America. In the choice of plays the term "contemporary" has been interpreted strictly. Of the eighteen plays in this book, one third were produced in the decade between 1910 and 1920; all save three are products of the twentieth century. Of these works six have not before been published in English and are here made available for the first time in America.

Comparing the plays in this volume with those which constituted the first series of *Chief Contemporary Dramatists*, some interesting tendencies in the theater of the western world are disclosed. While the thesis or problem play, derived from France and enforced by Ibsen, was predominant in the eighteen-nineties and the earlier years of the new century, the form disappears as the century approaches its second decade. The present volume contains no single distinct exemplar of this type of play. The result of the freeing of the play from the necessity of being socially serviceable has been greatly to enrich the theater with new interests both in structure and content, and to call into the craft of playmaking men from arts outside the theater.

The era of problems did not pass without leaving some impress on the theater for its good. While dominating the motives of plays, the scientific method had an influence as well on the vehicle of dramatic expression. The thesis playwright found the theater bound by the artificialities of an outworn technique. By applying honesty to the method of the play and accuracy to its observation, he left to the play a structure of greater naturalness and flexibility. It now appears that neither artificiality nor banality are necessary qualities of the bourgeois play, and that a fine and delicate artistry may be linked with a careful method in the study of human nature.

In the technical variety of the plays in this volume we have evidence of the release of the playwright from the restrictions current during the nineteenth century. A new technique is in process of development, upon which little can be learned in the pages of Freytag or even of Archer. Though its formulas are not as yet fixed, we are fortunate to have in Professor G. P. Baker's *Technique of the Drama* an avenue to the understanding of its practice.

Nothing in the history of the theater of the last generation is more significant than the manner in which it is connecting itself with the various activities of men. In a generation the theater has changed from a highly professionalized institution, with the door closed on all extraneous experiments, to a workshop of painters, novelists, and craftsmen generally. This fact is reflected in the varied interests of the authors represented in this volume. Worthy of note also is the rise of the drama of Spain and the general decline of the Northern influence, and the fact that two works of an absolute artistic integrity and originality are the results of collaboration.

Without claiming to have exhausted the rich field of the contemporary theater the editor believes that the eighteen plays here presented give a worthy picture of the drama of our time. Even more than in the case of the first volume the editor is aware of the painful sacrifices which are made necessary by the restricted compass of the volume. As

in the case of the first volume the editor must still regret that he is not able to include plays by Barrie and Shaw. Since the publication of the first series, Barrie has only strengthened his hold on a primary place in the drama of his time. Shaw, who belonged to the former volume by merit of two or three plays of extraordinary dramatic value, as well as by many discursive essays in conversational form, has, during the last five years, done nothing to strengthen his position as a dramatist.

Finally, the editor has in mind to acknowledge the courtesies he has met at the hands of authors and publishers, whose instant understanding of the purposes of this work has done much to make it possible; the friendly counsel of critics of many nations, freely drawn upon and as freely given, and the untiring patience and helpfulness of the members of the editorial staff of Houghton Mifflin Company, with whom the editor has been permitted to collaborate.

MILESTONES

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

By ARNOLD BENNETT and EDWARD KNOBLOCK

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TO

FRANK VERNON

WHO HAVING BROUGHT THE AUTHORS TOGETHER IN-
STRUCTED THEM TO COLLABORATE IN A PLAY AND
WHO WHEN THEY HAD OBEYED HIM PUT THE
PLAY ON THE STAGE WITH AN ART WHICH
EVOKED THEIR LIVELIEST GRATITUDE

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

JOHN RHEAD
GERTRUDE RHEAD
MRS. RHEAD
SAMUEL SIBLEY
ROSE SIBLEY
NED PYM
EMILY RHEAD
ARTHUR PREECE
NANCY SIBLEY
LORD MONKHURST
THE HONOURABLE MURIEL PYM
RICHARD SIBLEY
THOMPSON
WEBSTER
FOOTMAN

The Scene is laid throughout in the drawing-room of a house in Kensington Gore

The First Act is in 1860
The Second Act is in 1885
The Third Act is in 1912

MARIN UNION
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MILESTONES

ACT I

1860

The Scene represents the drawing-room of a house in Kensington Gore. The house is quite new at the time: all the decorations, pictures and furniture are of the mid-Victorian period. On the left three long windows look out on Kensington Gardens. On the right a large double door leads into the back drawing-room. A single door on the same side of the room leads to the hall and stairs. In the centre at back a large fireplace with a fire burning in it. The blinds and curtains are drawn; the lamps are lighted.

It is about half-past nine at night of the 29th of December, 1860.

MRS. RHEAD, *a woman of nearly sixty, is sitting on the sofa, crocheting some lace, which is evidently destined to trim petticoats. Her hair is dressed in the style of* 1840, *though her dress is of the* 1860 *period. Near her, in an armchair, sits* ROSE SIBLEY, *a gentle, romantic-looking girl of twenty-one, who is dressed in the height of fashion of the period. She is at work on a canvas wool-work pattern. Cups of after-dinner coffee stand near both ladies.*

MRS. RHEAD. Do permit me to look at your work one moment, my dear Rose.

ROSE. With pleasure, Mrs. Rhead.

MRS. R. Very pretty indeed. Nothing could be in better taste than these Berlin wool patterns.

ROSE. I got the design from the "Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine." It's to be one of three cushions for father's study.

MRS. R. I had an idea of doing the same sort of thing for my husband, after we moved into the new house here, three years ago. But then, when he died, I had n't the heart to go on. So I'm crocheting lace now instead for Gertrude's trousseau. Will you have some more coffee?

ROSE. No, thank you.

MRS. R. Just a drop. Gertrude, pour out — [*She looks about.*] Now where has Gertrude disappeared to?

ROSE. She left the room some moments ago.

MRS. R. Even between dinner and coffee she must be off.

ROSE. But why?

MRS. R. Do I know, my dear? Just managing the house and managing it, and managing it. Upon my word, Gertrude performs the duties of the place as if it were the foundry and she were John. My son and daughter are so alike.

ROSE [*interjecting enthusiastically*]. One's as splendid as the other.

MRS. R. She keeps account-books now.

ROSE [*rather startled*]. Of the house?

MRS. R. [*nods*]. And she says she shall show John a balance-sheet at quarter-day. Did you ever hear of such behaviour?

ROSE. She always was very active, was n't she? It's in the blood.

MRS. R. It is not in mine, and I am her mother. No! It is all due to these modern ways; that is what it is.

ROSE. I suppose John 's rather pleased.

MRS. R. Yes, John! But what about *your* brother? Will he be pleased? Is Gertrude going to make him the wife his position demands?

ROSE. I'm sure he'll be delighted to have his house managed as this one's managed.

MRS. R. But will it stop at that? Once one begins these modern ways, one never knows where they will end.

ROSE. I must say I was surprised she ever accepted Sam.

MRS. R. [*deprecatingly*]. Surprised? But why?

ROSE. We Sibleys are such an extremely

old-fashioned family. Look at father! And I do believe Sam's worse. Yes, I do believe Sam's worse than father. Thank goodness they have your son for a partner — two such slow-coaches, as they are.

MRS. R. Slow-coaches! My dear, remember the respect due to your father.

ROSE [*eagerly*]. Oh, I adore father, and Sam, too! I would n't have either of them altered for the world. But I do think Sam's very fortunate in getting Gertrude.

MRS. R. She also is very fortunate, very fortunate indeed. I have the highest respect for Sam's character, and my hope and prayer is that he and Gertrude will influence each other for nothing but good. But, between you and me, my dear, the first six months will be — well — lively, to say the least.

[GERTRUDE RHEAD *eniers by the door from the hall, carrying in her hand a cloak of the latest pattern of the period. She is twenty-one, high spirited, independent, afraid of no one.*]

ROSE. What on earth's that, Gertrude?

GERT. I've just been upstairs to get it. Help me, will you? I wanted to show it you. [ROSE *helps* GERTRUDE *with the cloak.*] I only bought it to-day, with the money John gave me for Christmas. Thank you — Well?

ROSE. Very daring, is n't it? I suppose it's quite the latest?

GERT. Next year's. Mother says it's "fast."

MRS. R. I hope you'll put it away before the men come up.

GERT. [*with assumed innocence*]. Why?

MRS. R. Because Samuel will surely not approve of it.

GERT. I bet you he will.

MRS. R. Gertrude!

GERT. The truth is, Rose, mother's only taken a prejudice against it because I brought it home myself this afternoon in a hansom cab.

ROSE [*staggered*]. Alone? In a hansom cab?

MRS. R. You may well be shocked, dear. My lady refuses the carriage, becauses of keeping the horses standing in this terrible frost. And then she actually hails a hansom-cabriolet! What Samuel would say if he knew I dare not imagine.

GERT. Well, what harm is there in it, mamma darling? [*Caresses her.*] I do wish you'd remember we're in the year 1860 — and very near '61. You really must try to keep up with the times. Why, girls will be riding on the tops of omnibuses some day.

ROSE [*protesting*]. Gertrude!

MRS. R. I hope I sha'n't live to see it.

[*Enter* THOMPSON, *a young butler, from the hall. He collects the coffee cups, putting them all on a tray.*]

GERT. Is the hot-water apparatus working properly, Thompson?

THOMPSON. Moderate, miss.

GERT. [*rather annoyed*]. It ought to work perfectly.

ROSE. What's the hot-water apparatus?

GERT. It's for the bath-room, you know.

ROSE. Yes. I know you'd got a bath-room.

GERT. It's just the latest device. John had it put in the week mother was down at Brighton. It was his Christmas surprise for her.

ROSE. Yes, but I don't understand.

GERT. It's quite simple. We have a boiler behind the kitchen range, and pipes carry the hot water up to the bath. There's one tap for hot and another for cold.

ROSE. How wonderful!

GERT. So when you want a hot bath all you have to do —

MRS. R. [*drily*]. All we have to do is to tell cook to put down a shoulder of mutton to roast. Very modern!

GERT. [*caressing her mother again*]. Horrid old dear! Thompson, why is it working only moderately?

THOMPSON [*by the door*]. No doubt because cook had orders that the beef was to be slightly underdone, miss.

[*Exit quickly with tray.*]

GERT. [*to* ROSE]. That was to please your carnivorous daddy, Rose, and he never came.

MRS. R. I do hope there's been no trouble down at the foundry between him and my son.

ROSE. So do I.

GERT. Why are you both pretending? You know perfectly well there has been trouble between them. You must have noticed the chilliness when our respective brothers met to-night.

ROSE. I assure you, Gertrude, I know *nothing*. Sam said not a single word in the carriage.

GERT. Well, was n't that enough? Or does he never speak in the carriage?

ROSE [*to* MRS. RHEAD]. Has John said anything?

MRS. R. I understood you to say that the reason your father did n't come to dinner was that he had an urgent appointment, quite unexpectedly, at the last moment.

ROSE. Yes, he asked me to tell you and make his excuses.

GERT. Urgent appointment at his club — most likely!

MRS. R. I wonder what the trouble can have been.

GERT. You don't, mother. You know! It's the old story — Sam and his father with their set ideas, pulling one way; and John with his go-ahead schemes, pulling the other — with the result —

MRS. R. The result is that we've had one of the most mournful dinners to-night that I have ever had the pleasure of giving.

GERT. I know! What a good thing we asked Ned Pym. If he had n't come to the rescue with his usual facetious, senseless chatter, I do believe Sam and John —

MRS. R. [*quickly, stopping her*]. Here are the gentlemen! Gertrude, take that cloak off.

[*Enter from the hall* SAMUEL SIBLEY, NED PYM, *and* JOHN RHEAD. SAMUEL SIBLEY *is twenty-eight, heavy, with a serious face, a trifle pompous, but with distinct dignity.* NED PYM, *who is a little over twenty, is the young dandy of the day: handsome, tall, with excellent manners, which allow him to carry off his facetious attitude rather successfully.* JOHN RHEAD *comes last. He is twenty-five, full of determination and purpose. He knows what he wants and is going to get it.*]

MRS. R. [*in a smooth tone to* ROSE]. Have you seen the new number of "Great Expectations," dear?

NED. What's this, Gertrude? Charades?

GERT. [*flouncing her cloak half defiantly at* SAM]. Paris!

NED [*coming between* SAM *and* GERTRUDE]. Evidently it has lost nothing on the journey over.

GERT. Ned, would you mind . . . I'm showing it to Sam. [*To* SAM.] Don't you like it?

SAM [*forcing himself*]. On my betrothed, yes.

NED [*facetiously*]. By the exercise of extreme self-control the lover conceals his enthusiasm for the cloak of his mistress.

GERT. [*appealing to* SAM]. But you do like it — don't you?

SAM [*evasively*]. Is n't it rather original?

GERT. Of course it is. That's just the point.

SAM [*surprised*]. Just the point?

GERT. [*taking the cloak off and flinging it half pettishly on a chair*]. Oh!

JOHN. It's original, and therefore it has committed a crime. [*Looking at* SAM.] Is n't that it, Sam?

SAM [*gives* JOHN *a look and turns to* MRS. RHEAD *with an obvious intention of changing the conversation*]. What were you saying about "Great Expectations," Mrs. Rhead?

MRS. R. [*at a loss*]. What *were* we saying about "Great Expectations"?

NED. Well, I can tell you one thing about it; it's made my expectations from my uncle smaller than ever.

[*He sits by* MRS. RHEAD.]

MRS. R. Oh, how is dear Lord Monkhurst?

NED. He's very well and quarrelsome, thank you. And his two sons, my delightful cousins, are also in excellent health. Well, as I was going to tell you; you know how my uncle has turned against Dickens since "Little Dorrit." I happened to say something about "Great Expectations" being pretty fairish, and he up and rode over me like a troop of cavalry.

MRS. R. [*puzzled*]. A troop of cavalry?

NED. It was at his Christmas party, too, worse luck. He as good as told me I dis-

agreed with him on purpose to annoy him. Now I cannot agree with him solely and simply because he allows me seven hundred a year, can I?

ROSE. Is he so difficult to get on with?

NED. Difficult? He's nothing but a faddist! An absolute old faddist! What can you do with a man that's convinced that spirits 'll turn his dining-table, and that Bacon wrote Shakespeare; and that the Benecia Boy 's a better man than Tom Sayers?

MRS. R. It seems a great pity you cannot do something to please your uncle.

NED. Would you believe it? He even wanted me to join the Rifle Volunteers. Now, I ask you, can you see me in the Rifle Volunteers, me among a lot of stockbrokers and chimney-sweeps?

GERT. We cannot, Ned.

NED. And in order to raise my patriotism last night — [*Slapping his knee violently.*] By Jove! [*He jumps up.*] By Heavens! Jiggered! Jiggered!

GERT. *and* ROSE. Ned!

NED. I am a ruined man! You see before you, kind friends, a man ruined and without hope! Last night my uncle sent me a ticket for the launching of the "Warrior."

SAM [*with a sneer*]. The "Warrior"! You did n't miss much!

NED. But my beloved aunt was commanded to be in attendance on Her Royal Highness at the said function. . . . Well, I forgot all about it. I repeat I forgot all about it. My uncle will certainly call this the last straw. There will be no quarterly cheque for me on New Year's Day.

ROSE. What *is* "The Warrior"?

JOHN [*bursting out*]. The "Warrior" is a steam-frigate — first vessel of the British Navy to be built entirely of iron. She's over six thousand tons burden, and she represents the beginning of a new era in iron.

ROSE [*adoringly*]. How splendid!

JOHN [*responding quickly to her mood*]. Ah, you agree with me!

ROSE [*enthusiastically*]. Of course! [*She breaks off self-consciously.*] Of course I agree with you.

JOHN [*after a slight pause — quickly*]. This 29th of December marks a great day in the history of the British Navy.

SAM [*with a slight superior smile, trying to be gay*]. Nonsense. All this day marks is the folly of the Admiralty. You may take it as an absolute rule that whatever the Admiralty does is wrong. Always has been, always will be. The "Great Eastern" was the champion White Elephant of the age. And now the "Warrior" has gone her one better.

JOHN. Sam, you don't know what you're saying. How can you talk about the "Warrior" when you've never even so much as laid eyes on the ship?

SAM. Well, have *you?*

JOHN. Yes — I went to the launch today.

SAM. You?

MRS. R. Why did you go, John? You never said a word to me.

JOHN. I went on business.

SAM. You told me you had an appointment with the bank.

JOHN. I only said that because I could n't stop to argue just then.

SAM. So you said what was n't so.

JOHN. I said what was necessary at the moment. I was n't going to leave you in the dark; never fear.

SAM [*curtly controlling himself*]. I see. [*A slight pause, then* SAM *turns abruptly to* GERTRUDE *and says gently*] Come and sing, dear. I have n't heard you sing for over a fortnight.

GERT. [*moved by the quarrel — after a pause in a low voice*]. What shall I sing?

SAM. Sing "Nita, Juanita."

GERT. No! I heard Madame Sainton Dolby sing it last week.

SAM. Do! — to please me.

[GERTRUDE *turns towards the double doors and goes off in silence with* SAM. NED *is about to follow instantly, but* MRS. RHEAD *stops him.*]

MRS. R. [*whispering*]. Give them just one instant alone.

NED. I beg pardon. My innocence at fault. [*The song is heard.*] [*A pause.*] Is that long enough?

[MRS. RHEAD *taps him, then she goes off after the others, followed by* NED. *A slight pause.*]

ROSE [*moving towards the doors*]. What a lovely voice she has!

JOHN [*abruptly, closing the doors*]. I want to talk to you.

ROSE [*nervous and self-conscious*]. To me?

JOHN. I wish I'd asked you to come to that launch.

ROSE. Where was it?

JOHN. At Greenhithe; only two stations beyond the foundry. Would you have come?

ROSE. I should have loved to . . . if Gertrude had come too.

JOHN [*musing*]. You should have seen her go into the water — the wave she made! All that iron — and rivets! Iron, mind you. . . . And then float like a cork. I never was at a launch before, and it gave me a thrill, I can tell you. And I'm not easily thrilled.

ROSE [*adoringly, but restraining herself*]. I'm sure you're not. I do wish I'd seen it. It must have been almost sublime.

JOHN. You'd have understood. You'd have felt like I did. Do you know how I know that?

ROSE [*shaking her head*]. No —

JOHN. By the way you said "how splendid" when I was telling the others just now.

ROSE. Really!

JOHN. Fact! That gave me more encouragement in my schemes than any words I ever heard.

ROSE. Please don't say that. Gertrude is always on your side. She's so like you in every way.

JOHN. Yes, Gertrude's all right. But she's got no poetry in her, Gertrude has n't. That's the difference between you and her. She's very go-ahead; but she does n't feel.

ROSE [*breathless*]. Do I, John? [*She looks down.*]

JOHN. I'll tell you something — tears came into my eyes when that frigate took the water. Could n't help it! [ROSE *raises her eyes to his.*] In thirty years every big ship in the world will be built of iron. Very few people to-day believe in iron for shipbuilding, and I know there's a lot of silly, easy sarcasm about it — especially in the papers. But it's coming! It's coming!

ROSE [*religiously*]. I'm sure you're right.

JOHN. If only your father and your brother thought as you do!

ROSE [*faintly*]. Yes.

JOHN. I'm in the minority, you see; two partners against one. If my father had lived, I know which side *he'd* have been on! I should n't have been in the minority then.

ROSE. You'd have been equal.

JOHN [*enthusiastically*]. No! We should certainly have rolled your excellent father and brother straight into the Thames!

ROSE [*amiably protesting*]. Please —

JOHN [*smiling*]. Forgive me — you know what I mean, don't you?

ROSE. I love to see you when you are enthusiastic!

JOHN. It's so plain. We've got probably the largest iron foundry on Thames-side. But our business is n't increasing as quickly as it used to do. It can't. We've come to about the limit of expansion on present lines. Ship-building is simply waiting for us. There it is — asking to be picked up! We're *in* iron. We know all about iron. The ships of the future will be built of nothing but iron. And we're right in the middle of the largest port in the world. What more can anyone want? But no! They won't see it! They — will — not — see — it!

ROSE. I wonder why they won't!

JOHN. Simply because they can't.

ROSE. Then one ought n't to blame them.

JOHN. Blame them! Good Heavens, no! I don't blame them. I'm fond of them, and I rather feel for them. But that's just why I want to smash them to smithereens! They've got to yield. The people who live in the past *must* yield to the people who live in the future. Otherwise, the earth would begin to turn the other way round, and we should be back again in the eighteenth century before we knew where we were, making for the Middle Ages.

ROSE. Then you think a conflict is unavoidable?

JOHN. Absolutely unavoidable! That's the point. It's getting nearer every hour. . . . Why is your father not here to-night?

ROSE. I don't know, but I was afraid —

JOHN. *I* know and *Sam* knows. It must be because he has heard somehow of an enterprise I am planning, and the news has upset him. He's vexed.

ROSE. Poor dear old thing! Then you've started a scheme already?

JOHN [*nods*]. I have. But I can't carry it out alone.

ROSE. If there is one man in the world who could stand alone, I should have said you were that man.

JOHN. I know. That's the impression I give. And yet nobody ever needed help more than I do. I'm not all on the surface, you know.

ROSE. What sort of help?

JOHN. Sympathy — understanding.

ROSE [*low*]. I see.

JOHN. Of course you see! And that's why I suddenly decided I must have a bit of a chat with you — this very night. It's forced on me. And I feel I'm rather forcing it on you. But I can't help it — honestly I can't. Rose, you're on my side, are n't you?

ROSE. I believe you're in the right.

JOHN. Would you like to see me win — [*silence*] — or lose?

ROSE. I don't think I could bear to see you beaten.

JOHN. Well, then, help me! When you look at me with that trustful look of yours, I can do anything — anything. No other woman's eyes ever had the same effect on me. It's only because you believe in me. No, that is n't the only reason; it is n't the chief reason. The chief reason is that I'm in love with you — there you have it!

ROSE [*sinking her head*]. Oh! —

JOHN [*coming to her*]. Curious! I've known you all my life. But I was n't aware of all that you meant to me, until these difficulties began. You're essential to me. You can't imagine how much depends on just you!

ROSE. Really?

JOHN. You're too modest, too womanly to realise it. Why, sometimes a tone of yours, a mere inflection, almost knocks me over — You are n't crying, surely? What are you crying for?

ROSE. It 's too much for me, coming like this, with no warning.

JOHN. Rose, be mine! I'll work for you, I'll succeed for you. No woman in this country shall have a finer position than yours.

ROSE. I don't want a fine position — except for you.

JOHN. I'm not hard, really.

ROSE. But I like you to be hard. It's when you're inflexible and brutal that I like you the most.

JOHN. Then you do like me a little — sometimes? [*Kisses her hands.*]

ROSE. I can't help telling you. I did n't hope for this. Yes, I did. But the hope seemed absurd. Is this real — now?

JOHN. My love!

ROSE. John, you say I don't realise how much I mean to you. Perhaps I do though. But it's impossible for *you* to realise how I want to give my life to you, to serve you. No *man* could realise that. A woman could. I shall be your slave. [JOHN *looks at her with a little start.*] Yes, I know it sounds queer for me to be talking like this. But I must. It thrills me to tell you. . . . I shall be your slave.

JOHN. Don't make me afraid, my darling!

ROSE. Afraid?

JOHN. Afraid of being unworthy.

ROSE. Please. . . . [*A slight pause.*] Has the singing stopped?

JOHN. A long time ago.

ROSE. They 'll be coming in, perhaps.

JOHN [*vaguely without conviction*]. No.

ROSE. What will your mother and Gertrude say?

JOHN. You know as well as I do, they 'll be absolutely delighted.

ROSE. And father?

JOHN [*alertly*]. Rose, you're mine, whatever happens?

ROSE. Oh, nothing must happen now! Nothing shall happen!

JOHN. But suppose I could n't carry out my scheme without quarrelling with your father? And he refused his consent to our being married?

ROSE. My heart would be yours for ever and ever. But I could n't marry without father's consent.

JOHN. But —

ROSE. I could n't —

JOHN. Why not?

ROSE. It would not be right.

JOHN. But you love me?

ROSE. Yes, but I love father, too. And he's getting very old. And he's very dependent on me. In any case to give me up would be a great sacrifice for him. To lose me against his will — well, I don't know what would happen!

JOHN. As things are just now — he's bound to refuse.

ROSE. But are you so sure he won't have anything to do with your scheme?

JOHN. You heard Sam!

ROSE. Yes; but you have n't discussed your plans very thoroughly with Sam. He seemed quite surprised.

JOHN. Suppose I speak to Sam to-night; tell him everything. At any rate, I shall know then where I stand.

ROSE. To-night?

JOHN. Now! I *might* win him over. Anyhow, he'll do what he can to make things smooth for us with your father — surely! After all, he's engaged to Gertrude!

ROSE. Just as you think best. . . . And Sam's very fond of me, though he never shows it.

JOHN. Let me get it over now, instantly. Will you go in to the others?

[ROSE *looks at him in silence, then rises and goes to the double doors.* JOHN *stops her and solemnly and passionately kisses her, then opens the doors and she passes through.*]

JOHN [*calling into the other room*]. I say, Sam! Mother, I want a word with Sam alone.

[SAMUEL *enters by the double doors.* JOHN *closes them behind him.*]

SAM [*suspicious, and not over friendly*]. What is it? Not business, I hope?

JOHN [*with a successful effort to be cordial*]. No, no!

SAM [*following* JOHN'S *lead, and to make conversation*]. I was wondering what you and Rosie were palavering about.

JOHN. Samuel, you've gone right into the bull's-eye at the first shot — Sam. I've just been through a very awkward moment.

SAM. Oh, I see! That's it, is it?

JOHN. I've made a proposal of marriage to my partner's sister. Startling, ain't it?

SAM. No! If you care to know, I was talking to your mother about it last week.

JOHN. About what?

SAM. About the betting odds — whether it was more likely to come off this year or next. Your mother was right, and I was wrong — by a couple of days.

JOHN [*startled*]. But you'd none of you the slightest ground. I've never shown — Certainly Rose has never shown —

SAM [*teasingly*]. No, of course not. But you know how people *will* gossip, and jump to conclusions, don't you? I know, I went through it myself, not very long ago either. I remember the clever way in which you all knew about it before I'd got half-way to the end of my first sentence.

JOHN. Sam, you're devilish funny.

SAM. Even the dullest old Tory is funny once in his life. Am I right in assuming that Rose did not unconditionally refuse your offer?

JOHN. She did me the honour to accept it.

SAM. I must confess I'm not entirely surprised that she did n't spurn you.

JOHN. All right, old cock. Keep it up. I don't mind. But when you're quite done, you might congratulate me.

SAM [*not effusively*]. I do, of course.

JOHN. I suppose you'll admit, even as a brother, that I'd have to go rather far before I met a woman with half Rose's qualities.

SAM. Yes, Rosie's all right. Of course she's cold; she has n't got what I call poetry in her. That's the difference between her and Gertrude.

JOHN [*facing him*]. Do you honestly think Rose has no poetry in her? Rose?

SAM. Easy does it, my tulip! Have it your own way!

JOHN [*good humouredly*]. I suppose where sisters are concerned, all brothers are alike.

SAM. Well, I'm looking at one. We're a pair.

JOHN. Shake! [*They shake hands,* SAM

rather perfunctorily.] Now, Sam, I'm going to rely on you.

SAM. What for?

JOHN. I don't think you had any fault to find with my attitude towards your engagement, had you? I welcomed it with both arms. Well, I want you to do the same with me.

SAM. But, my dear fellow, I'm nobody in the affair. You're the head of a family; I'm not.

JOHN. But you have enormous influence with the head of a family, my boy.

SAM [*rather falsely*]. Why! Are you anticipating trouble with the governor?

JOHN. I'm not anticipating it — but you know as well as I do — probably much better — that he ain't very friendly disposed this last day or two. The plain truth is — he's sulking. Now why? Nothing whatever has passed between us except just every-day business.

SAM. Well, the fact is, he suspects you're keeping something nasty up your sleeve for him.

JOHN. Has he told you?

SAM [*somewhat pugnaciously*]. Yes, he has.

JOHN. And what is it I'm supposed to have up my sleeve?

SAM. Look here, Jack. I'm not here to be cross-examined. If there's anything up your sleeve, you're the person to know what it is. It's not my sleeve we're talking about. Why don't you play with the cards on the table?

JOHN. I'm only too anxious to play with the cards on the table.

SAM. Then it is business you really wanted to talk about after all!

JOHN [*movement of irritation concealed*]. I expect your father's heard about me and Macleans, though how it's got abroad I can't imagine.

SAM. Macleans? Macleans of Greenhithe?

JOHN. Yes. That's what's worrying the old man, is n't it?

SAM. I don't know.

JOHN. He has n't mentioned Macleans to you?

SAM. He has not. He is n't a great talker, you know. He merely said to me he suspected you were up to something.

JOHN. And what did you say?

SAM. Briefly, I said I thought you *were*. [*Disgustedly.*] But, by gad! I never dreamed you were hobnobbing with the Maclean gang.

JOHN. Macleans are one of the oldest shipbuilding firms in the South of England. I went to the launch to-day with Andrew Maclean.

SAM. What's ship-building got to do with us?

JOHN. It's got nearly everything to do with us. Or it will have. Now listen, Sammy. I've arranged a provisional agreement for partnership between Macleans and ourselves.

SAM. You've —

JOHN. Half a minute. Macleans are rather flattered at the idea of a connection with the august firm of Sibley, Rhead and Sibley.

SAM. By God! I should think they were. [*Walks away.*]

JOHN. They've had an output of over 25,000 tons this year. All wood. Naturally they want to go in for iron. They'll pay handsomely for our help and experience. In fact, I've got a draft agreement, my boy, that is simply all in our favour.

SAM. Did you seriously suppose —

JOHN. Let me finish. It's a brilliant agreement. In three years it'll mean the doubling of our business. And we shall have the satisfaction of being well-established in the great industry of the future. Your father's old. I don't expect him to be very enthusiastic about a new scheme. But you're young, and you can influence him. He'll be retiring soon, and you and I will be together — just the two of us. We're marrying each other's sisters. And we shall divide an enormous fortune, my boy.

SAM. And have you had the impudence to try to make an agreement behind our backs?

JOHN [*controlling himself*]. I've made no agreement. I've only got the offer. It's open to you to refuse or accept. I only held my tongue about it so as to keep the job as easy as possible.

SAM. You had no right to approach anyone without consulting us.

JOHN. I was going to tell you to-morrow. But I guessed from your father's attitude these last two days that something had leaked out. That's why I'm telling you first, Sam — to-night. Come now, look at the thing calmly — reasonably. Don't condemn it offhand. A very great deal depends on your decision — more than you think.

SAM. I don't see that anything particular depends on my decision. If we refuse, we refuse. And we shall most decidedly refuse.

JOHN. But it's impossible you should be so blind to the future! Impossible!

SAM. See here, John! Don't you make the mistake of assuming that any man who does n't happen to agree with you is a blind fool. To begin with, it is n't polite. I know you *do* think we're blind, old-fashioned, brainless dolts, father and I. We've both felt that for some time.

JOHN. I think you're blind to the future of iron ships, that's all.

SAM. Well, shall I tell you what we think of *you?* We think you've got a bee in your bonnet. That's all. We think you're a faddist in the style of Ned Pym's noble uncle!

JOHN [*his lips curling*]. Me like Lord Monkhurst! Ha!

SAM. Precisely. Don't you go and imagine that all the arguments are on one side. They are n't. Five-sixths of the experts in England have no belief whatever in the future of iron ships. You know that! Iron ships indeed! And what about British oak? Would you build ships of the self-same material as bridges? Why not stone ships, then? Oh, yes, I know there's a number of faddists up and down the land — anything in the nature of a novelty is always bound to attract a certain type of brain. Unfortunately we happen to have that type of brain just now in the Cabinet. I quite agree with my father that the country is going to the dogs. Another Reform Bill this year! And actually an attempt to repeal the paper duty. But, of course, people who believe in iron ships would naturally want to unsettle the industrial classes by a poisonous flood of cheap newspapers! However, we've had enough common-sense left to knock both those schemes on the head. And I've no doubt the sagacity of the country will soon also put an end to this fantastic notion of iron ships.

JOHN [*quietly*]. I see.

SAM. Oh, don't think I'm not fond of iron! Iron means as much to me as it does to you. But I flatter myself I can keep my balance. [*More quietly.*] We did n't expect this of you, John, with your intellect.

JOHN [*as before*]. Very well.

SAM. I've made it clear, have n't I?

JOHN. Quite.

SAM. That's all right.

JOHN [*still quietly*]. Only I shall dissolve partnership.

SAM. Dissolve partnership? What for?

JOHN. I shall go on with Macleans alone.

SAM. You don't mean it.

JOHN. I mean every single word of it!

[*He rises. They look at each other.*]

SAM. Then I can tell you one thing. You won't marry Rosie.

JOHN. Why sha'n't I marry Rosie?

SAM. After such treachery.

JOHN [*raising his voice*]. Treachery! I merely keep my own opinion — I leave you to yours.

SAM. Do you think father will let you drag Rose into this fatuous scheme of yours? Do you think he'll give his daughter to a traitor?

JOHN [*sarcastic and cold*]. Don't get on stilts. [*Then suddenly bursting out.*] And what has my marriage got to do with you? When I want your father's opinion, I'll go to your father for it.

SAM. Don't try to browbeat me, John. I know my father's mind, and what's more, you know I know it. And I repeat, my father will never let his daughter marry a —

JOHN [*shouting*]. Silence!

[*Enter* MRS. RHEAD *by the double doors, followed by* NED PYM, GERTRUDE, *and* ROSE. *The women remain silent.*]

NED [*facetiously coming forward*]. Why silence? Go on. We've only come in be-

cause we thought it might interest us. What's it all about? A hint will suffice.

JOHN. Ned, you're a blundering donkey, and you will be a blundering donkey to the end of your life.

NED. My one desire is to please.

GERT. [*coming to* SAM, *in a quiet, firm tone*]. Sam, what's the matter?

SAM. Nothing! We must go! Rosie, get ready. [*Very respectfully to* MRS. RHEAD.] I'm sorry to break up the evening.

GERT. But you can't go like this.

SAM [*with deference*]. My dear Gertrude, please leave matters to your brother and me. You're a woman, and there are things —

GERT. [*stopping him*]. It is possible I am a woman, but I'm a reasonable creature, and I intend to be treated as such.

MRS. R. [*very upset*]. My dear child, remember you are speaking to your future husband.

GERT. That's just why I'm speaking as I am. I ask Sam what's the matter — [*scornfully*] — and he says "Nothing." Am I a child? Are we all children?

SAM [*curtly*]. Come, now, Rose.

GERT. And why must Rose go off like this? She's engaged to John.

SAM. Who told you?

GERT. Her eyes told me when she came out of this room.

MRS. R. We all knew it, and no word said. We've been expecting it for weeks.

[MRS. RHEAD *and* ROSE *embrace.*]

SAM. You are mistaken, Gertrude. Rose is not engaged to John, and she is not likely to be.

GERT. You object?

SAM. I do, and I know my father well.

GERT. You object to John for a brother-in-law? John! Why? — You might at least condescend to tell Rosie, if not me. It's an affair that rather interests her, you see.

SAM. If you must know, John is going to leave our firm.

MRS. R. John?

SAM. He thinks my father and I are old-fashioned, and so he's leaving us.

MRS. R. John! Leave the firm? Surely you're not thinking of breaking up Rhead and Sibley?

SAM. Sibley, Rhead — and Sibley.

MRS. R. It was Rhead and Sibley in my young days, when your father and John's were founding it. John, you cannot mean it!

SAM [*sarcastically*]. He's going to build iron ships.

GERT. And is that any reason why you should make poor Rosie unhappy and spoil her life?

SAM. I do not propose to argue.

GERT. The man who does not propose to argue with me is not going to be my husband.

MRS. R. Gertrude!

GERT. [*looking at* SAM]. I mean it.

[SAM *bows.*]

MRS. R. Please don't listen to her, Sam.

SAM. All my apologies, Mrs. Rhead.

GERT. And you, Rosie, what do you say to all this?

ROSE [*humbly and tearfully*]. I — I hardly understand. Sam, what is the matter?

JOHN [*coming to* ROSE]. It's quite simple. I believe in the future of iron ships and I have the courage of my convictions. Therefore you are not to be allowed to marry me. You see the connection is perfectly clear. But you shall marry me, all the same!

SAM [*confidently*]. You don't know my sister.

NED [*to* SAM, *facetiously*]. And you don't know John.

SAM [*turning to* NED, *firmly*]. Ned, go and order my carriage, there's a good fellow.

NED [*going off by the door into the hall*]. Oh, very well.

[*He closes the door behind him.*]

MRS. R. John, John, why are you so set in your own ideas? Everything was going perfectly smoothly. We were all so happy. And now you must needs fall out with your partners over iron ships. Do you prefer your iron ships to Rose's happiness and your own? *Is everything* to be sacrificed to iron ships?

JOHN. There need be no question of sacrifice, if —

SAM. If you can have it your own way.

Of course. Mrs. Rhead, your son wants to risk the ruin of all of us. Now, so far as we Sibleys are concerned, we won't allow him to do so. If he still persists in his purpose, very well, that's *his* look-out. Only — he can hardly be surprised if Rose's family object — and very strongly — to letting him make her his wife. One does not entrust one's daughter or one's sister to a traitor.

GERT. Sam, don't be childish!

SAM [*drawing himself up*]. I beg your pardon.

MRS. R. John, I'm your mother. Listen to me. Give up this idea of yours. For my sake — for the sake of all of us.

JOHN. I cannot.

MRS. R. But if it means so much unhappiness.

JOHN. I should be ashamed of myself if I gave it up. I believe in it. It's my religion.

MRS. R. John, I beg you not to be profane.

JOHN [*a little quieter*]. I cannot give up my idea, mother. I should be a coward to give it up. I should be miserable for the rest of my days. I could never look anyone in the face, not even my wife.

[*Enter* NED *from the hall.*]

NED [*to* SAM *in a flunkey's voice*]. Carriage is waiting, my lord.

SAM. Now, Rose! Good evening, Mrs. Rhead.

GERT. Just a moment. [*Drawing a ring off her finger*]. Ned! Hand this ring to Mr. Sibley with my compliments.

NED. Must I?

GERT. Yes.

NED [*taking the ring*]. The donkey becomes a beast of burden. [*Handing ring to* SAM.] Sam, you get this, but you lose something that's worth a lot more.

SAM [*taking the ring*]. Of course I have no alternative.

ROSE. Good-bye John.

MRS. R. John, she's going. Will you let her?

JOHN [*rigidly*]. I cannot give up my idea.

SAM [*going into the hall as* ROSE *stands hesitating*]. Come along, child. I'm waiting.

ROSE [*moving a step towards* JOHN]. Stick to your idea! Let me go! I love you all the more for it!

JOHN. Don't worry. Rose. The future is on our side.

ROSE [*looking straight at him*]. I —

[*Her emotion gets the better of her; she turns quickly and hurries from the room.*]

GERT. [*blankly, in spite of herself*]. The future!

[*She sinks down on a sofa and bursts into sobs.* JOHN *stands, looking after* ROSE.]

CURTAIN

ACT II

1885

The Scene represents the same drawing-room as in Act I. But twenty-five years have passed. We are now in the year 1885. *Consequently great changes have occurred. The furniture has been re-arranged and added to. The flowered carpet of the first Act has given place to an Indian carpet. There are new ornaments amongst some of the old ones. The room is over-crowded with furniture in the taste of the period.*

It is about four o'clock of an afternoon in June. The curtains are drawn back and the sun is shining brightly outside.

ROSE SIBLEY, *now* MRS. JOHN RHEAD, *forty-six years of age and dressed in the fashion of* 1885, *her hair slightly grey at the temples, is seated writing some notes at a desk near the windows.* NED PYM *enters from the hall, followed by* JOHN RHEAD. *The former has developed into a well-preserved, florid, slightly self-sufficient man of forty-six. The latter, now fifty, has not changed so much physically except that his hair is grey and his features have become much firmer. But his manner has grown even more self-assured than it was in the first Act. He is in fact a person of authority; the successful man whose word is law.*

JOHN. Oh, you *are* there, Rosie. I've brought a person of importance to see you.

ROSE [*rising*]. Ned —

[*They shake hands.*]

NED. Now please don't say what you were going to say.

ROSE. And what was I going to say?

NED. That I'm quite a stranger since I came into the title.

ROSE [*curtseying and teasing*]. Lord Monkhurst, we are only too flattered — I was merely going to say that you look younger than ever.

NED [*seriously*]. Don't I? That's what everyone says. Time leaves me quite unchanged, don't you know.

JOHN. In every way. How old *are* you, Ned?

NED [*with a sigh*]. Well, I shall never see thirty again.

JOHN. What about forty?

NED. Or forty either. But my proud boast is I'm nearer forty than fifty.

JOHN. Well, it can only be by a couple of months.

NED. Sh! — It's a lot more than you say, Jack.

JOHN. I was fifty in April. There's just five years' difference between us.

ROSE [*to* NED]. You look more like John's son.

NED. Say nephew; don't be too hard on him.

ROSE. But I do wish you would go out of mourning. It does n't suit you.

NED. Not these beautiful continuations?

ROSE. No!

NED. Well, I'm awfully sorry. But I can't oblige you yet. Please remember I've got three sudden deaths to work off. I think that when a man loses a harsh but beloved uncle in a carriage accident, and two amiable cousins through a misunderstanding about toadstools, all in twelve months, why — [*gesture*] — the least he can do is to put himself unreservedly into the hands of his tailor.

ROSE. I —

JOHN [*stopping her, kindly but rather tyrannically*]. Now enough of this graceful badinage. Ned and I are here on business. What are you up to, there, Rose?

ROSE [*with eager submissiveness*]. I was doing the invitations for the dinner, or rather for the reception.

JOHN. Good. I've got some more names in my study. You'd better come in there with me.

ROSE. Yes, love.

NED. Am I invited to this dinner? I generally get very hungry about eight o'clock at nights.

ROSE [*teasing*]. Yes, I *think* I put you down. It's our wedding-day.

NED. Don't tell me how long you've been married. It would age me!

ROSE. Considering that we have a daughter who is turned twenty-two.

JOHN. Yes, Ned, you must face the facts bravely. Old Mr. Sibley died in January, 1860 —

ROSE. Sixty-one, love.

JOHN [*after a frown at being corrected*]. Sixty-one. And we were married in June of the following year. Surely you recall the face Sam pulled when he gave my little Rosie away.

ROSE. But, love, it was a great concession for him to give me away at all, was n't it?

JOHN. Oh, yes!

ROSE. By the bye, he's coming up to town this afternoon.

JOHN. What, here?

NED. Oh! But I ought to see old Sam.

ROSE. Stay for tea, and you'll see *him* and his wife, too.

NED. His wife? His what did you say?

ROSE. Now, Ned, it's no use pretending you don't know all about it.

NED. I remember hearing a couple of years ago, before I went to India, that Sam had staggered his counting-house by buying one of these new type-writing machines, and getting a young woman to work it for him.

ROSE. That's the person. Her name is Nancy.

NED. Is it? Only fancy; Nancy, Nancy, in the counting-*house!* I say — are these girl-clerks or clerk-girls going to be a regular thing? What's coming over the world?

JOHN [*shakes his head*]. Passing craze! Goes with all this Votes-for-Women agitation and so on. You'll see, it won't last a year — not a year! Of course, Sam — susceptible bachelor of fifty and over — just the man to fall a victim. Inevitable!

ROSE. She's a very well-meaning, honest creature.

NED. You intimate with her, Rose?

ROSE. I went to see her several times after she had her baby. They're living at Brockley.

NED. Baby! Brockley! No more typewriting then. The typewriter has served its turn — eh? — Of course it was a great catch for her.

JOHN. Yes, but it would n't have been if Samuel had n't sold out.

NED. How much did he retire with about?

JOHN. Well, you see he was losing three thousand a year. He got £20,000 net cash.

NED. I'm not a financier, but £20,000 cash in exchange for a loss of £3,000 a year does n't seem so bad! Think of the money he'd have made though, if he'd taken up with your ideas!

JOHN [*ironically*]. You recollect the folly of iron ships? And the bee in my bonnet? [*Laughs.*] There were only four wooden steamships built in this country last year. The rest were iron; and I was responsible for half a dozen of 'em.

NED. What's all this talk about steel for ships?

JOHN [*disdainfully*]. Just talk.

NED. Well, of course, if you're building at the rate of six steamers a year, I can understand your generosity in the matter of subscriptions.

ROSE. He *is* generous, is n't he?

NED. Told your wife about your latest contribution?

JOHN. No, I was just going to.

ROSE [*proudly*]. John tells me everything.

JOHN. And Rosie always approves, don't you, Rosie? Ah! The new generation can't show such wives.

ROSE [*eagerly*]. Well?

JOHN. I've decided to give ten thousand pounds to the party funds — politics, you know.

NED. You see, it's to save the country. That's what it amounts to practically, in these days. *I* know, since I've gone into politics.

ROSE. How noble! I'm so glad, John.

NED. And the great secret — shall I tell her, or will you, Jack?

JOHN. Go on.

NED. How should you like your husband to be a baronet, Rose?

ROSE. A baronet?

NED. Sir John Rhead, Bart., and Lady Rhead!

ROSE [*ecstatic*]. Is he going to be?

NED. As soon as our side comes into power — and we shall be in power in a month. John 'll be on the next Honours' List.

ROSE. In a month!

NED. The Budget's bound to be thrown out. They're trying to increase the taxes on beer and spirits — I've studied the question deeply. I know what will happen.

ROSE. How magnificent!

JOHN Then you approve? [ROSE *kisses* JOHN *fondly*]. That's all we've called in for, just to make sure.

ROSE [*weeping*]. I —

JOHN. What's the matter?

ROSE. I'm only sorry we have n't had a son.

NED. There, there! I'm sure you did your best, Rose.

ROSE [*to* JOHN]. Are they making you a baronet because you're giving ten thousand to the party funds?

NED. My dear woman! Of course not! That's pure coincidence.

ROSE [*convinced*]. Oh!

NED. Your beloved John will be made a baronet solely on account of his splendid services to commerce. Does n't he deserve it?

ROSE. No one better. Do you know, I can scarcely believe it. Who —? Tell me all about it.

JOHN. Well, it's thanks to Ned in the first place.

ROSE. To Ned?

NED [*pretending to be hurt*]. You need n't be so surprised, Rose. You seem to be unaware that I've gone into politics. Don't you read the newspapers?

ROSE. No, I leave the newspapers to my daughter.

NED. If you did, you'd know that I made a sensation in the Indian Debate, in

the House of Lords. All that Afghanistan business, don't you know.

ROSE. Really!

NED. Oh, I became quite a Nob, at once. Bit of luck me having gone to India, was n't it? I'd spent the best part of a month in India; so, of course, I knew all about it.

ROSE [*solemnly*]. Of course.

NED. The leader of the Opposition said I had a great future!

JOHN. No doubt.

NED [*simply*]. I shall specialise in India and the Navy. You see my father being a rear-admiral, I ought to be familiar with the subject. If fellows like me don't begin to take an interest in our neglected Navy, England 'll be playing second fiddle to Russia in five years' time. Mark my word, in 1890. In 1890.

ROSE. Perhaps you'll be in the Government some day?

NED. There's no "perhaps" about it. I shall! There's only one difficulty.

ROSE. What's that?

NED [*mysteriously and important*]. I'm told I ought to marry.

JOHN [*rather self-consciously*]. Nothing simpler.

NED. I know! I've had seventeen indirect offers this last six months, and that's a fact.

ROSE. None suitable?

NED. I'm afraid of 'em. It's no joke going and marrying a perfect stranger. I want somebody I know — somebody I've known all my life, or at least all hers.

ROSE. And can't you find her?

NED. I can. I *have* done.

ROSE. Who is it, may one ask?

NED. Jack knows.

JOHN [*turning to* ROSE *and clearing his throat*]. Ned would like to marry into *our* family, Rose.

NED [*eagerly*]. You know I've been dead sweet on Emily for a couple of years at least.

ROSE [*after a pause*]. I know you're very fond of her, and she of you.

NED [*as above*]. You think she is, really?

ROSE. But it seems so queer.

JOHN [*peremptorily*]. How queer? We're respectable enough for the young rascal, are n't we?

ROSE. Of course. It would be ideal — ideal! My poor little Emily!

NED. Well, I've got that off my chest. I'll be moving. I must be at the Carlton at three-thirty to settle up John's business with the panjandrum.

ROSE. You'll come back for tea. *She'll* be here.

[*Enter from the hall* EMILY *and* GERTRUDE. *Both are dressed to go out.* EMILY *is a handsome girl of twenty-two. She has fine qualities, combining her father's pluck with her mother's loving nature. But she has been rather spoilt by her parents.* GERTRUDE *follows. She has grown into a faded, acidy spinster with protective impulses for her niece,* EMILY, *on whom she spends all her suppressed maternal feelings.*]

EMILY [*slightly disconcerted*]. Why, father! How is it you are n't at the works this afternoon earning our bread-and-butter?

JOHN [*delighted*]. Such impertinence!

ROSE. Emily, I really wonder at you! What your grandmother Rhead would have said to such manners if she'd been alive, I dare n't think. And Lord Monkhurst here, too!

EMILY. Well, mamma, you see, grandmother is n't alive! [*To* NED, *who, after shaking hands with* GERTRUDE, *advances towards her*]. And as for dear old Uncle Ned — [NED, JOHN, *and* ROSE *are all somewhat put about by this greeting.* NED *hesitates, his hand half out.*] Are n't you going to shake hands, then?

NED [*shaking hands*]. Why "uncle"? You've never called me uncle before?

EMILY. Have n't I? It seems to suit you.

NED. I'm severely wounded. And I shall retire into my wigwam until you make it up to me.

ROSE. You really are very pert, Emily.

EMILY [*affectionately*]. I should have thought you would adore being my uncle. I'm sure I like you lots more than I like Uncle Sam, for instance.

NED. That's better. I'm peeping out of

my wigwam now. Only I won't be your uncle. I won't be anybody's uncle. I don't mind being your cousin, if that's any use to you.

GERT. [*sharply*]. He's afraid of being taken for the same age as your auntie, darling.

NED [*to* GERTRUDE]. Half a moment, Gertrude, and I'll try to think of a compliment that will turn your flank.

GERT. My flank, Ned?

NED. I mean —

EMILY [*to her parents and* NED]. Where were you all off to?

ROSE. Your father and I are going to the study.

NED. And I'm going on an errand, but I shan't be long.

JOHN. And may we ask where you and Auntie Gertrude are "off to," Miss Inquisitive?

GERT. Oh, Mr. Preece is calling for us to take us to the Royal Academy.

EMILY. And then we shall have tea at the new Hotel Métropole, in Northumberland Avenue. It's the very latest thing.

JOHN [*in a different tone*]. Preece? But he was here last Sunday.

EMILY. Yes, it was then we arranged it.

JOHN. I don't like the idea of your seeing so much of Preece. And your mother does n't like it, either.

ROSE. No, indeed!

GERT. But why not? He's the cleverest man in your works. You've often said so.

JOHN. He may be the cleverest man in my works; but he is n't going to be the cleverest man in my house. Who gave him leave to take half a day off, I should like to know?

GERT. He said he had business in the West End.

EMILY [*to* NED]. Now if you want to make yourself useful as a cousin, please explain to these called-so parents that they ought n't to spoil me one day, and rule me with a rod of iron the next. It's not fair. It's very bad for my disposition.

NED [*to* JOHN]. Is this man-about-town the same Preece you were telling me of?

EMILY. There you are, you see! He tells everyone about Mr. Preece. He's as proud as Punch of Mr. Preece.

JOHN [*more kindly*]. Arthur Preece is a youth that I discovered in my drawing office. Last year I took out a patent for him for bending metal plates at a low temperature; and it's attracted some attention. But our relations are purely business.

GERT. Still, it was you who first asked him to the house.

JOHN [*drily*]. It was. And Rose kept him for tea. It's all our fault as usual. However — [*rising*] — you'll kindly tell Master Preece that you can't give yourselves the pleasure of his society this afternoon.

EMILY. But why?

JOHN [*continuing*]. And if he's obstreperous, inform him that *I* am in my study, and rather anxious to know exactly what his business in the West End is.

EMILY [*insisting*]. But why, father?

JOHN [*firmly*]. Simply because your mother and I wish you to be in this afternoon. Uncle Sam and Aunt Nancy are coming, for one thing.

EMILY [*disdainfully*]. Uncle Sam! Aunt Nancy!

ROSE. Emily! I won't have you bandying words with your father; you seem to have lost all sense of respect.

EMILY [*to* NED *angrily*]. Are n't they tyrants!

[*She goes to a little table and takes off her bonnet, in a quick annoyed way.*]

ROSE [*very politely and nicely to* GERTRUDE]. Gertrude, if *you* are n't going out, could you come into the study about those addresses?

GERT. [*somewhat snappishly, taking* EMILY'S *bonnet*]. Of course!

[*She goes out quickly.*]

JOHN [*to* NED]. Well, you've got to be off then, for the moment.

[*All are near the door now, except* EMILY, *who is drawing off her gloves savagely.*]

ROSE [*in a low voice to* NED]. Till tea, then.

[*She goes out, nodding her head significantly.*]

NED [*hesitating*]. Yes. [*To* JOHN.] But

I must just kiss the hand of this new cousin of mine first.

JOHN [*in a peculiar tone*]. Oh! All Right! [*He follows* ROSE.]

NED [*going up to* EMILY, *whose face is turned away ingratiatingly*]. Now, I'm not included in this frown, am I?

EMILY [*facing him and bursting out*]. But don't you think it's a shame, seriously?

NED. Of course if you've *promised* Mr. Preece, and don't want to disappoint him —

EMILY [*with false lightness*]. Oh, Mr. Preece is nothing to me! Only I *do* want to know where I am. The fact is they let me do as I like in little things, and they're frightfully severe in big things. Not really big things, but — you know —

NED. Middling big things.

EMILY. After all I'm twenty-two.

NED. A mature age.

EMILY [*huffily*]. Oh! Naturally you take their side!

NED. Honour bright, I don't! I tell you I feel far more like your age than theirs. I'm much younger than your father — much! That's why I don't like being called uncle.

EMILY. Really?

NED. Really.

EMILY [*confidentially*]. And there's another thing. They ought n't to treat Auntie Gertrude like that, ought they? She's got more brains than anybody else here.

NED. Than your father?

EMILY. No, not than father. I meant mother, and Uncle Sam, and me — and you —

NED. I see.

EMILY. Who is it runs the house? You don't suppose it's mother, do you? Mother is absorbed in father, quite absorbed in him. No! It's auntie does everything. And yet she's nobody, simply nobody. She arranges to take me out, and they stop it without so much as apologising to her.

NED. Well, you see, she's an old maid.

EMILY. I don't care whether she's an old maid or not. She's the only friend I have. Father and mother are most awfully fond of me and all that, and mother *is* sweet, is n't she? But still that makes no difference. There are two camps in this house; they're in one, and auntie and I are in the other. And I tell you we have to be regular conspirators, in self-defence. Of course I'm trusting you.

NED [*who has been playing with a book he has picked up from a table*]. You may.

EMILY. For instance, they won't let me read Ouida. They don't even like auntie to read Ouida.

NED. This is n't Ouida.

EMILY. I know it is n't. That's William Black. They're always throwing William Black at me, and I hate him. I want to read Ouida.

NED. You must wait till you're married.

EMILY. I won't. And I do so want to go to the Hotel Métropole.

NED. I thought it was the Royal Academy.

EMILY. The Academy too.

NED. Look here, Emily. Suppose I arrange a little theatre party?

EMILY. Not with father and mother. They'll want to go to something silly.

NED. No. Just your auntie and me — and you, of course.

EMILY. Will you?

NED. Rather!

EMILY. You're quite coming out. But will they allow it?

NED. You bet they will.

EMILY. Where?

NED. Anywhere you like.

EMILY. Do you know "The Mikado's" been running three months, and I have n't seen it yet?

NED. "Here's a 'How d' you do!'" The Savoy then.

EMILY. Oh! Hurrah! Hurrah! Thanks; you are a dear.

NED [*pleased*]. Am I? That's all right then. Au revoir. [*Turns to the door.*]

EMILY [*calling him back*]. Cousin! [*She beckons him to come to her.*] What's this secret between you and father and mother?

NED. What secret?

EMILY [*crossly*]. Now you need n't pretend. I could see it as plain as anything when I came in. And when they went out too, for that matter.

NED. I can't stand being bullied.

EMILY. Tell me, and I won't bully you.

NED [*solemnly*]. You're going to be related to a baronet.

EMILY [*disturbed*]. They don't want me to marry a baronet, do they?

NED. Foolish creature! No. It's the opposite camp that's about to receive a title.

EMILY [*delighted*]. Father — a baronet!

NED. I'm just off to make the final arrangements now.

EMILY. Truly?

NED. Don't be misled by my modest exterior. I'm a terrific nob — really.

[*He turns to go.*]

EMILY [*as he is going*]. Did n't you say something about kissing my hand? One of your jokes, I suppose.

[NED *comes and kisses it, then hurries to the door. As he opened it he looks back and says "The Mikado," and hurries out.* EMILY *stands a moment lost in thought, a smile on her lips. Then she hums, quite unconsciously, "For he's going to marry Yum-Yum, Yum-Yum!" Goes back to the table on which the William Black is lying, picks it up — opens it, reading a bit, then flings the book aside, muttering in disgust, "Black!"*]

[THOMPSON *enters. He has grown old in the service of the* RHEADS.]

THOMPSON [*announcing*]. Mr. Preece.

[*He withdraws.*]

[ARTHUR PREECE *enters. His age is twenty-five; he is a man of the clerk class, whose talent and energy have made him what he is. He is full of enthusiasm, earnest, but with a rough sense of humour. Rather short and stocky in figure, but important. His clothes are neat and useful — but very simple.*]

PREECE [*excited*]. Good afternoon, Miss Rhead. I'm afraid I'm a little early.

EMILY [*putting on the manner of a woman of the world*]. Not at all, Mr. Preece. I'm sure Auntie Gertrude will be delighted.

PREECE [*vaguely*]. She's not here now, your aunt?

EMILY [*looking round*]. No.

PREECE [*eagerly*]. I wonder if I should have time to tell you something before she comes in. It is n't that it's a secret. But nobody knows yet, and I should like you to be the first.

EMILY. How very kind of you, Mr. Preece!

PREECE. I've only just known it myself.

EMILY. It seems to be very thrilling.

PREECE. It is, rather. It's just this. I've succeeded in making mild steel nearly five per cent lighter than it's ever been made before. Nearly five per cent lighter, and no extra cost.

EMILY. Really! How much is five per cent?

PREECE. It's one-twentieth part. You know, it's enormous.

EMILY. I suppose it is.

PREECE. I daresay you don't quite realise what it means — this enormous change in the specific gravity. But it *is* enormous.

EMILY. What is specific gravity? In a word?

PREECE. It's — well — Now supposing — Do you mind if I explain that to you some other time? I'd like to, awfully!

EMILY. Oh! Any time!

PREECE. It's quite O.K., you know. And the thing comes to this. Assume the steel for a biggish ship cost £20,000. Under my new process you'd get the same result with steel that weighed about a twentieth less and cost, roughly, £19,000. Net saving of nearly one thousand pounds!

EMILY [*impressed*]. And did you —

PREECE [*continuing*]. And not only that. As the hull weighs so much less, you can carry a proportionately heavier cargo in the same bottom.

EMILY. Well, I never heard of such a thing! And am I really the first to know?

PREECE. You are.

EMILY. And you found out this all alone?

PREECE. Oh, yes! Except the manager, nobody has any idea of what I've been experimenting on.

EMILY. Not even father?

PREECE. No.

EMILY. I suppose he knows you *are* experimenting.

PREECE. Of course. That's my job. That's what he took me out of the drawing office for. I'm always experimenting on something.

EMILY. I expect you're what they call an inventor.

PREECE [*humorously*]. I expect I am. [*Eagerly.*] I'd practically finished this experiment a week ago. But I had to make sure whether there was any manganese left in the steel. I've been getting a friend at the City and Guilds of London Institute to analyse it for me — you know, the big, red building in Exhibition Road. I've just come from there.

EMILY. So *that* was your business in the West End? [PREECE *nods.*] I'm sure auntie and I had n't an idea it was anything half so romantic.

PREECE. It *is* romantic, is n't it?

EMILY. No wonder you're so excited.

PREECE. Am I? Well, I don't care! It's all right. That's all I care about. Here's a bit of the steel now.

[*He offers her a small sample.*]

EMILY. Is it for me? May I keep it?

PREECE. I want you to.

EMILY. Rather a strange thing for a girl to keep, is n't it?

PREECE. You don't mind —

EMILY. I'd part with all my jewellery before I parted with this. D' you know, it makes me feel very proud. And when I think of poor old father not knowing *anything* about it —

PREECE. I shall tell him to-morrow if he can spare time to see me.

EMILY. Spare time to see *you* — why?

PREECE. Oh! you don't know, but Mr. Rhead's a sort of crowned head on the works. You can't walk into his office as if it was a public-house, I can tell you.

EMILY. But it's so important for him.

PREECE. Rather! Much more important for him than for me.

EMILY. Why?

PREECE. Under our agreement! Our agreement has five years to run yet, and during that time everything I do belongs to the firm. I only get a percentage on whatever my inventions bring in.

EMILY. What percentage?

PREECE. Ten. For every hundred pounds profit I get ten pounds and the firm gets ninety.

EMILY. But what a frightful shame! It ought to be the other way about — you ninety pounds and the firm ten.

PREECE. Oh, no! It's fair enough — really! They pay me a very good salary. And you must remember if Mr. Rhead had n't taken me out of the drawing office, I should be there now getting two pounds a week!

EMILY. I don't care! I think it's a frightful shame. I shall tell father.

PREECE [*half playfully*]. Please don't, unless you want to ruin me with him. I owe just about everything to your father.

EMILY. But it's so horridly unfair.

PREECE. Oh, no! I assure you. I shall have all the money I want, and more. And it will always be *my* invention. That's the point.

EMILY. Then you don't care for money?

PREECE. Yes, I do. I want enough. In fact, I want a good deal. But what's interesting is to *do* things, and to do 'em better and quicker, and less clumsily than ever they were done before. If I can make nineteen tons of steel do the work of twenty — Well, I reckon I've accomplished something for the world.

EMILY. I like that. It's very original.

PREECE. Not my notion, you know. I'm a disciple of William Morris.

EMILY. Oh! He's a poet, is n't he?

PREECE. You should read "The Earthly Paradise."

EMILY. I should love to.

PREECE. If people would read a bit more William Morris, and less of these silly gimcrack novels about lord and actresses — Ouida and so on — What's the matter?

EMILY. Nothing. [*With a certain self-satisfaction.*] William Black's silly too, is n't he?

PREECE. Of course.

EMILY [*firmly*]. I'm going to read "The Earthly Paradise."

PREECE. Let me lend it you. I've got a signed copy, from the author.

EMILY. You know an author!

PREECE. I know William Morris. I was up at his stable last night.

EMILY. His stable?

PREECE. He gives lectures in a stable behind his house at Hammersmith. I wish you'd heard him pitching into the House of Lords. "A squad of dukes."

EMILY. But why?

PREECE. Oh, because they are n't interested in the right thing.

EMILY. What is the right thing?

PREECE. The right thing is to make the world fit to live in.

EMILY. But is n't it?

PREECE. Have you ever been to the East End?

EMILY. I did some slumming once, just to see. But I was so ashamed to go into their awful houses, that I never tried again.

PREECE [*getting up, excited*]. That's grand! That's grand! That's just how I feel. Every one feels like that that's got any imagination and any sense of justice. We *ought* to be ashamed of the East End. At least the governing classes ought. Not for the poor, but for themselves. They ought to go and get buried if they can't govern better than that.

EMILY [*after a pause, rising as in thought; moved*]. But how are you going to change it?

PREECE. Not by slumming, that's a certainty. You can only change it by getting some decent laws passed, and by playing fair, and doing your job, and thinking a great deal less about eating and drinking, and fine clothes, and being in the swim and all that sort of nonsense. Do you know what I am going to do as soon as I can afford? I'm going to be a Member of Parliament.

EMILY [*low*]. Why did you offer to take us to the Hotel Métropole?

PREECE [*confused*]. I thought you'd like it. I — I —

EMILY. You despise it yourself.

PREECE. I'm human.

EMILY. But — [*She draws close to him.*]

PREECE. I'm very ambitious. I want a whole lot of things. But if I thought I could find someone — find a woman, who — who feels as I feel; who'd like before everything to help to make the world decent — I'd —

EMILY. I —

[*Profoundly stirred, she falls into his arms.*]

PREECE. Emily!

[*He kisses her long, holding her close.*]

EMILY [*gently releases herself and walks away. With effort*]. I have n't told you. I forgot. Father does n't wish me to go out with you this afternoon. He's here now, in the study.

[GERTRUDE *enters from the hall, without her bonnet this time.*]

GERT. Good afternoon, Mr. Preece. [*They shake hands. To* EMILY.] I suppose you — er — told Mr. Preece that the excursion is countermanded?

[*She goes to the fireplace.*]

EMILY. Yes, Mr. Preece was just going. [*Gently.*] Good afternoon. [*She holds out her hand to* PREECE, *who hesitates.* EMILY *repeats in firmer tone.*] Good afternoon. [*In a tender voice.*] Please! [*With a smile.*] Another time!

[PREECE *shakes hands and, bowing to* GERTRUDE, *retires. As he departs* GERTRUDE *rings the bell by the fireplace.*]

GERT. Well, I've been catching it, I can tell you!

EMILY [*shaken*]. What about?

GERT. About you. They simply asked me to go into the study so that I could be talked to — for your good, my girl.

EMILY. They were n't rude, were they?

GERT. You know your mother's always most considerate. She's an angel. But your father rubbed it in finely. How many times had you seen the young man? — If ever alone? — What on earth was I thinking of? — What on earth was your mother doing to have noticed nothing? (As if your mother ever noticed anything!) And so on! Of course, I told them pretty straight that they were making a most ridiculous fuss about nothing.

EMILY. Well, anyhow, I've let him kiss me.

GERT. You've let him kiss you? When?

EMILY. Just now. Here.

GERT. But what —

EMILY. Don't ask me. I don't know, I really don't. But I've felt it coming for some time.

GERT. Do you mean to say he walked in here and proposed to you straight off, and you accepted him?

EMILY. I did n't accept him, because he did n't propose. He was talking about his ideas.

GERT. What ideas?

EMILY [*with a vague gesture*]. Oh, about the world in general, and all that he means to do. He's made another marvellous invention, only no one knows except me. It was the excited way he talked — somehow — I could n't help it — before I knew what we were doing, he'd got his arms round me.

GERT. [*rather sternly, in spite of her tender feeling*]. Well, Emily, I must say I'm very surprised.

EMILY. So am I.

GERT. Of course you're engaged to him?

EMILY. Am I?

GERT. And it'll be all my fault. However, it's got to be seen through to the end now.

EMILY. He has very strange ideas. They sound splendid when he's explaining them. But d' you know, he thinks Ouida's silly.

GERT. Does he?

EMILY. And he really does n't care about money and fashion and all that sort of thing. He despises going to the Hotel Métropole. He only offered to go there because he thought it would please our horrid little minds — I was so ashamed.

GERT. But surely you knew all this before — at least you guessed it?

EMILY. I did n't, auntie. I never thought about his ideas, never! I just —

GERT. You just simply fell into his arms as soon as you heard them, that's all. Well, surely in that case, you must admire these ideas of his tremendously.

[*She sits in an armchair.*]

EMILY. I don't know. Yes. I *admire* them, but —

GERT. Listen, young woman! Are you in love with him, or are n't you?

EMILY. I — I — How can you tell whether you're in love with a man or not?

GERT. Supposing you were alone with him here, now — would you let him kiss you again? [*Pause.*]

EMILY. I —

GERT. Now, out with it!

EMILY. I should n't be able to stop him, should I?

GERT. That's enough.

EMILY. Yes. But then what about father? He would be frightfully angry, I can see that. Oh, I do hate unpleasantness, auntie. And Mr. Preece's ideas are really very peculiar.

GERT. [*after a look at* EMILY]. Listen, Emily! I was once engaged to be married.

EMILY. Oh, auntie! I always knew you must have been. Do tell me. Who was it?

GERT. Your Uncle Sam.

EMILY [*staggered*]. Not Uncle Sam?

GERT. You're surprised, naturally. But you must n't be too hard. Remember it was twenty-five years ago, Uncle Sam was a splendid fellow then. He's old now. We're all old, except you — and Mr. Preece. You've got the only thing worth having, you two.

EMILY [*sitting at* GERTRUDE'S *feet*]. What's that?

GERT. Youth. Your Uncle Sam lived the miserable life of a bachelor till he was fifty. He'd have been a very different man if I'd married him. And I should have been a very different woman.

EMILY. Why did you break it off?

GERT. I broke it off because there were difficulties; and because I thought his ideas were peculiar; and because I hated unpleasantness! And now look at me! Could n't I have ruled a house and a family? Could n't I have played the hostess? [*In another tone.*] To-day the one poor little joy I have in life is to pretend I'm your mother. Look at my position here. I'm only —

EMILY [*passionately*]. Oh, auntie, don't! I can't bear to hear you say it. I know!

GERT. We were opposite in every way, your uncle and I, but I — I loved him.

EMILY [*softly*]. Do you still love him, auntie?

GERT. [*in a flat tone of despair*]. No! Love dies out.

EMILY [*after a moment*]. Why did n't you marry somebody else?

GERT. There *was* nobody else. There never is anybody else when you've made the mistake I made. Marry! I could have chosen among a dozen men! But they were all the wrong men. Emily! Fancy pouring out tea every day of your life for the wrong man. Every breakfast time — every afternoon! And there he sits, and nothing will move him. Think of that, Emily — think of that. [*A pause.*]

EMILY [*embracing her again*]. Oh, auntie! *I* love you awfully!

GERT. You must show some courage, my girl. Don't be afraid of anything — and especially not of arguments and threats. What does unpleasantness matter, after all? It's over in a month; but a mistake lasts for ever.

EMILY. You'll help me?

GERT. That's all I live for. [*She kisses* EMILY *tenderly.*] Is that Sam's voice?

[THOMPSON *enters.*]

THOMPSON [*announcing*]. Mr. and Mrs. Sibley. [*He retires.*]

[SAMUEL SIBLEY *and his wife* NANCY *enter.* SAMUEL, *who is now fifty-three, has grown into a rather flabby nonentity, grey-haired with longish side whiskers and glasses. His manner is important and fussy.* NANCY *is a buxom, Yorkshire woman of thirty-two, round-faced, good-natured, full of energy. She wears the fashionable jersey of* 1885 *and a very definite "bustle."*]

SAM. Well, Gertrude? Well, my little Emmie!

[*He kisses* EMILY, *who gives her cheek unwillingly; then shakes hands with* GERTRUDE.]

GERT. How are you, Sam; and you, Mrs. Sam?

NANCY. Nicely, thank you! [*Shaking hands vigorously with* GERTRUDE *and* EMILY.] Everybody well, here?

EMILY. Yes, thank you.

NANCY. That's fine! Then your mother got Sam's letter saying we were coming?

EMILY [*drily*]. Oh, *yes!*

NANCY. I said to Sam it would happen be best to write and tell you. So he wrote — [*with a look at* SAM] — finally.

SAM [*with a serious tone*]. We nearly did n't come.

GERT. Anything wrong?

SAM. Infant's temperature up at a hundred last night. However, it was normal this morning.

NANCY. You know he takes the baby's temperature every night.

EMILY. Oh, do you, uncle? How funny!

SAM. I don't see anything funny about it, niece. Good thing if some parents took their responsibilities a bit more seriously.

NANCY. I must say Sam makes a very good father.

GERT. Let me see — how old is Dickie now?

SAM. We never call him Dickie — Richard, better; less nonsensical.

[*He settles down solemnly in a chair.*]

NANCY. You've no idea what I call him when you're not there, Sam! [*To* GERTRUDE.] He was two on the second of this month. He talks like anything! You ought to see him and his father together. It's killing! The little thing's so *exactly* like Sam.

EMILY [*examining* SAM]. Is he? We must go down to Brockley, must n't we, auntie?

NANCY [*drily*]. I've been expecting you for the better part of some time. [*Then cordially.*] I should love you to come as soon as I've got a new cook. [*With emphasis.*] Oh, my!

GERT. Are you having trouble?

NANCY. Trouble's not the word. And as for the nurse-maid! If it was n't for Sam being free —

GERT. D' you take your share, Sam?

NANCY. By the hour he wheels that child up and down.

EMILY. Not in the street?

SAM. Why not, niece? Anything to be ashamed of in being a father?

NANCY. That's what we came up for today, to buy a new perambulator. He did try to repair the other in the little workshop he's made himself at the end of the garden — and most useful he is for odd jobs. Upon my word, he's busy from

morning to night! But we thought it better to buy a new pram altogether.

SAM [*discontented*]. Nancy would insist on having one of those new things with indiarubber tyres, as they call them.

NANCY [*very definitely*]. Now, Sam. I thought we'd done with that question.

SAM. Yes; but rubber tyres on gravel paths! It 's obvious they 'll not last a —

NANCY. I told you Mrs. Caton across the road told me —

SAM. Oh, very well! Very well! Only it's very light and flimsy.

EMILY [*restless*]. I think I'll go and tell father and mother you're here.

[*Going towards the door.*]

NANCY [*rising, very convinced*]. Come and see for yourself what you think of the pram and the rubber tyres.

EMILY [*rising*]. Is it here?

NANCY. Yes, in the hall.

SAM. I deemed it imprudent to let them send it down by train. So we brought it away on the roof of a four-wheeler.

EMILY [*patronisingly*]. Well, let's go and inspect it, Aunt Nancy.

[EMILY *and* NANCY *go off.*]

GERT. [*waiting till the door is closed; in low quiet tones*]. Sam, I'm so glad you've come. There's going to be another tragedy in this house, if some of us don't do something.

SAM. *Another* tragedy? What do you mean?

GERT. I just mean a tragedy. That child's head over heels in love with young Arthur Preece, at the works, and John simply won't hear of it.

SAM. Why?

GERT. [*shrugs her shoulders*]. Why, indeed? Sam, if there's any discussion while you're here I want you to help me all you can.

SAM. But really, Gertrude, how can I meddle in an affair like that? I have my own responsibilities.

GERT. Sam, it's many years since I asked the slightest favour of you.

SAM [*moved, friendly*]. Come, come. Don't go so far back as all that. We're all very comfortable as we are, I think.

[*The door opens.*]

GERT. [*quick and low*]. But will you? You've got more influence than I have.

SAM [*low*]. All right. [*Pats her arm.*] All right.

[*Enter* ROSE *and* JOHN.]

JOHN [*coming up to* SAM *a little patronisingly*]. Sam, glad to see you! How's the precious family getting on? Any new trouble lately?

SAM [*a little sharply*]. Oh, no! And what about yours? [*In a significant, bantering tone.*] Any new trouble lately?

JOHN. Mine? Trouble? No!

ROSE [*kissing* SAM *fondly*]. Your wife's here?

SAM. She's downstairs somewhere —

JOHN [*interrupting sharply*]. Where is Emily?

GERT. She's just gone with Mrs. Sam to look at a new —

JOHN [*interrupting again*]. Preece has n't been, has he?

GERT. He's been and gone.

JOHN. Were you here?

GERT. I was here part of the time.

JOHN. You ought to have been here all the time. What did you tell him?

GERT. Emily told him you wished us to stay at home this afternoon.

JOHN [*nodding curtly*]. So much for that.

SAM. So even *you* are not quite without 'em, Jack?

JOHN. Not quite without what?

SAM. Family troubles.

JOHN. What in heaven's name are you driving at?

SAM. Nothing. I only gathered from your tone that Preece was considered — er — dangerous.

JOHN [*hedging*]. Oh, no! I'm merely taking precautions. Preece is an excellent fellow in his way — brilliant even.

SAM. But you would n't care for him as a son-in-law.

JOHN [*positively*]. I should not.

ROSE [*shaking her head*]. No!

SAM. I've always understood he had a great career before him.

JOHN. So he has, undoubtedly. You should see what he's got me to do at the works. Made me instal the telephone. And his latest is that he wants me to put down

an electric light plant. What do you think of that?

SAM. He must be very enthusiastic.

GERT. I should think he just is!

JOHN. Why, the boy's invention mad. He thinks of nothing else.

SAM. Well, if you ask me I'd sooner have that kind of madness than most kinds I meet with. Seems to me people have gone mad on bicycles or banjo-playing or this lawn-tennis, as it's called. It was different in our day, Jack, when young men took an interest in volunteering and the defence of their country. I've quite decided when our boy grows up —

GERT. [*putting a hand on* SAM'S *arm*]. Sam! — Emily may be back any moment. We were talking about Arthur Preece.

SAM. So we were. [*Turns again to* JOHN.] Well, Jack —

JOHN [*annoyed*]. Look here, Sam — I don't mind being frank with you. Her mother and I have somebody else in view for Emily.

SAM. Oh!

GERT. [*bitterly*]. I thought as much.

[*A slight pause.*]

JOHN [*carelessly to* SAM]. Have you heard I'm going to have a title?

SAM. No! What title?

JOHN. Baronet.

GERT. [*quickly*]. You never told me.

ROSE [*soothingly*]. It only came out this afternoon, Gertrude dear.

SAM. Oh — ho.

JOHN [*still with an affectation of carelessness*]. And what's more, Emily can marry — under the very happiest auspices — into the peerage. That's why we don't want her to see too much of young Preece.

SAM. And may one ask who is the Peer?

JOHN. Monkhurst, of course.

SAM. Ned!

GERT. Ned?

ROSE. Would n't it be ideal, Sam!

SAM. He's keen — Ned?

JOHN. Very! Put that in your pipe and smoke it, my boy.

[EMILY *and* NANCY *reënter rather suddenly. All the others have a self-conscious air.*]

JOHN [*rather negligently*]. Well, Nancy. How are you? It seems the infant's grown out of his pram. [*Shakes hands.*]

NANCY [*rather proud of being able to call the great man "*JOHN*" and yet trying not to be proud*]. Glad to see you, John.

[ROSE *and* NANCY *embrace. An awkward pause.*]

EMILY [*with suspicion*]. What's the matter here? More secrets?

GERT. [*in an outburst*]. It's being arranged that you are to marry Lord Monkhurst.

JOHN [*nonplussed, coldly angry*]. Gertrude, are you stark staring mad — blurting things out like that?

ROSE [*shocked*]. Gertrude, dear — really!

GERT. [*firmly*]. She'd better know, had n't she?

JOHN. You —

NANCY [*blandly*]. Well, anyhow, the fat's in the fire now, is n't it, John?

JOHN [*turning to* NANCY]. Sorry you've been let in for a bit of a scene, Nancy.

NANCY [*cheerfully*]. Oh! Don't mind me. I know what family life is — my word! I'm from Yorkshire! Best to have it out fair and square — that's my experience.

SAM. That's what she always says when the infant's obstreperous. Why, the night before last, just as we were getting off to sleep —

JOHN. There's nothing to have out!

GERT. Oh, yes, there is. Emily's in love with Arthur Preece.

JOHN. What's this?

EMILY [*very nervous; to* GERTRUDE]. What do you mean — it's being arranged for me to marry Lord Monkhurst? Me — marry old Ned!

JOHN. He's not old.

EMILY. Is n't he old enough to be my father?

JOHN. Certainly not.

SAM [*mischievously*]. I doubt it.

JOHN [*turning on him*]. You're the last man to talk about difference of age between husband and wife.

ROSE [*smoothing over the awkwardness*]. But you're very happy, are n't you, dear?

SAM. Naturally.

NANCY. I don't see that age matters — so long as people really fancy each other. I'm sure Sam gets younger every day.

JOHN. Of course! [*Turning to* EMILY *angrily.*] What 's this tale about you being in love with Preece?

EMILY. I —

JOHN. Has he been proposing to you?

EMILY. No.

JOHN [*disdainfully*]. Then how can you be in love with him?

EMILY [*resenting his tone*]. Well, I *am* in love with him, if you want to know, father.

JOHN. You have the audacity —

NANCY. Come, John, it's not a crime.

JOHN. Preece is not of our class at all. It's a gross mistake to marry out of your class.

NANCY [*bantering*]. Now, John, that's not very tactful, seeing that Sam married out of *his* class.

SAM. Don't be foolish, Nan! I married a lady. Even a marquis could n't do more.

JOHN. My dear Nancy, you belong to the family — that's enough! Preece is quite a different affair. Just a common clerk until I —

EMILY. I can't see what more you want. He has the most beautiful manners, and, as for money, he'll make lots.

JOHN. How will he make lots?

EMILY. With his inventions. You have n't heard about his latest. But I have. He's told me. Here it is.

[*Hands piece of steel to her father.*]

JOHN [*taking it*]. And what's this?

EMILY. I don't know exactly. But it's very wonderful. It's steel, I think — a new kind.

JOHN [*drily*]. Yes. I see it's steel.

EMILY. And I think it's a great shame for you to take nine-tenths of all the money from his inventions, and for *him* to only have one-tenth.

JOHN [*flashing up*]. What? Has he been whining to you in that style?

EMILY [*passionately*]. No, he has n't been whining to me in that style. He has n't been whining at all. He thought it was quite fair. It only came out by pure accident, and I promised I'd never breathe a word. You must forget what I've said.

JOHN. I'll teach him —

EMILY [*more passionately*]. If you ever say a single thing, father, I'll run away and never come back.

ROSE. Child! please!

[*She tries to soothe her.*]

SAM [*to calm the stress*]. Hand over, Jack. [*Takes the piece of steel and looks at it.*] I fully admit I was wrong about iron. But even *you* won't prophesy that steel's going to take the place of iron ships!

JOHN [*shortly*]. I don't think it is in *my* works. But, as for prophesying — I don't prophesy. Heavens knows no one can accuse me of being conservative in my ideas. But I must say the new generation seems to be going clean off its head. If one of these up-to-date inventors came along and told me he'd made a flying-machine, I should keep my nerve. I should n't blench.

SAM. Good! Good!

GERT. Now you're at flying-machines! What have flying-machines got to do with Emily's happiness? If she wants to marry young Preece —

EMILY. Yes, if I want to marry him, why should n't I?

ROSE. Because your father objects.

EMILY. Oh, mother. Did n't you marry father, in spite of everyone?

JOHN. Who's told you that?

EMILY. I know. [*General glances at* GERTRUDE.]

ROSE [*indignant*]. Do you mean to compare young Preece with your father?

EMILY. Why not? You loved father, and I —

JOHN. I'll tell you why not. I was independent. I was my own master. Young Mr. Preece is n't. That's why.

GERT. [*sarcastically*]. Surely it's a free country — for men!

JOHN. It's not a country where honest men break their contracts. Young Preece can't patent an invention without me. Can't do anything without me. If I like, I can force him to mark time for five years, five solid years.

EMILY. Does that mean that if I married him in spite of you —

ROSE [*horrified*]. Child! Well may you say we've spoilt you!

JOHN [*calmly*]. It means that if he had the impudence to marry you, I'd scotch him — *that* I would.

EMILY. But why? Who's going to suffer?

How can my marriage affect anybody but me?

JOHN. Don't talk like a little fool. Your marriage is the most important thing in the whole world to your mother and me. And if you persist in doing something against our will, I shall retaliate — that's all.

EMILY [*with a despairing gesture*]. I can't make out your objections to Mr. Preece. Why, he's a genius; everyone *knows* he's a genius.

JOHN. And what if he is? Are geniuses to be the kings of the earth? Not quite! Geniuses have to be kept in order like criminals. If there's one thing above all to be said in favour of the English character, it is that we've known the proper way to treat geniuses.

SAM. I'm inclined to agree with you there.

JOHN [*to* EMILY]. Oh, it is n't Preece's class I object to. He's presentable enough. The whole truth is he's a highly dangerous sort of young man we're breeding in these days. He — he makes you feel — uncomfortable. On the works, under discipline, admirable. Outside the works — no, no! And no! I've been following Master Preece's activities far more closely than he thinks. He little guesses I know he's a Socialist!

SAM. A Socialist! Good God! Gertrude, you never told me that. A Socialist!

GERT. Why are men always so frightened by names?

JOHN. A Socialist. [*To* EMILY, *an ultimatum.*] And I don't intend you to marry him. If you do, you ruin him. That's the long and short of it. Now, Emily, have we heard the last of Preece — or not?

ROSE [*to* EMILY]. Darling!

GERT. I really think you ought —

JOHN [*curtly*]. Pardon me, Gertrude. This is n't your affair. It's my daughter's.

GERT. [*to* EMILY]. Your father is right. It's your affair. It depends solely on you.

EMILY [*weeping imploringly*]. What am I to do, auntie?

[GERTRUDE *turns away with a movement of pain and disgust.*]

EMILY. I don't want to make everybody miserable.

GERT. [*reproachfully*]. Oh, Emily!

EMILY. I could n't stand — in Mr. Preece's light! I could n't.

JOHN. There! There! Of course you could n't.

ROSE [*comforting her*]. My poor lamb!

JOHN. And don't go and suppose I want to compel you to marry Monkhurst — or anybody. You're absolutely free.

GERT. [*sniffs audibly*]. H'm!

JOHN [*glaring at* GERTRUDE *to* EMILY]. Only, as your aunt *has* dragged in his name, I don't see any harm in telling you this much. He adores you. We all like him. His wife will have a position second to none in London Society. But don't let that influence you. Take him or refuse him as you please; your mother and I won't complain.

ROSE. Indeed we sha'n't, my love.

JOHN. Still a marriage like this is not to be sneezed at. Is it, Emily? [*Pause.*] I say, *is* it?

EMILY [*trying to smile; weakly*]. No.

JOHN [*continuing*]. Not that I think it would n't be a big slice of luck for Monkhurst, too! There's only one Emily! [*He pats her.*] And then my title —

NANCY. Your title, John?

JOHN [*carelessly*]. Have n't you heard?

NANCY. No!

JOHN [*as above*]. Baronetcy!

NANCY [*staggered*]. Wonders 'll never cease. [*To* ROSE.] What a pity you've got no son, dear!

ROSE [*with a trace of bitterness*]. Don't crow over us, dear!

[*She clasps* EMILY *to her.*]

SAM [*with a sigh of regret for himself*]. Well, well! And I've retired into private life!

JOHN [*surveying him patronisingly*]. And you've retired into private life. You're safe at Brockley. But then you see you had n't got a bee in your bonnet.

SAM [*accepting the sarcasm with a foolish smile*]. Well, well!

NANCY [*sharply*]. I don't see that there's any need for so much well-welling.

JOHN. Come and give your father a kiss, Em.

[EMILY *obeys.*]

GERT. [*rising as she does so, full of emotion*]. I —

[THOMPSON *enters followed by a Footman. They bring in tea.* GERTRUDE *pulls herself together. There is a slight pause while the Servants arrange the tea-things. They leave the room.*]

ROSE. Emily, dear, will you pour out?

EMILY [*demurely*]. Yes, mother.

ROSE. I hope Ned won't be late.

NANCY. Is Lord Monkhurst coming for tea?

ROSE. He promised to.

NANCY. Oh, dear! If I'd known I was going to meet him — [*She rises and arranges her bustle and the draperies of her skirt.*] I do hope he won't notice that pram. A pram in a hall looks so common.

[*She reseats herself.* THOMPSON *enters.*]

THOMPSON [*announcing*]. Lord Monkhurst! [*He retires.*]

GERT. [*passionately*]. Here's your lord!

[NED *enters rapidly.*]

NED. Well, kind friends. Hullo, Sam!

SAM. Hullo, Ned! [*They shake hands.*] By the way, my wife — Nancy, Lord Monkhurst. [NANCY *flustered, bows.*]

NED [*going towards* EMILY]. Delighted! Any of that tea for me?

GERT. [*with great feeling*]. And there's your tea — your daily tea, for the rest of your life.

JOHN [*angrily*]. Gertrude!

GERT. No, I will speak! Ned, what would *you* do, if I told you that —

EMILY. [*pleading*]. Aunt Gertrude, please.

GERT. Emily?

EMILY [*weakly*]. It's all right, auntie.

GERT. All right? Oh, very well! [*Desperately.*] What's the use!

[*She turns and walks quickly out of the room.*]

NED [*surprised at* GERTRUDE'S *tone*]. What's the matter with dear Gertrude?

JOHN. Nothing. One of her moods. [*Drawing up a chair, with authority.*] Now then, Emily, — tea!

CURTAIN

ACT III

1912

The same drawing-room, but now in 1912, *it has undergone an entire change. All of the old mid-Victorian furniture has been crowded out by furniture of later style. Changes of ornaments, etc. The lights are electric; so is the bell by the fireplace.*

It is a June evening, about half-past ten at night. Signs of festivity — flowers, presents [in gold] are standing about. It is the evening of the Golden Wedding of JOHN *and* ROSE. [WEBSTER, *a smart, military-looking butler of forty, is arranging a tray of whiskey and soda. The door to the hall opens, and a* FOOTMAN *enters.*]

FOOTMAN [*announcing*]. Lord Monkhurst. [*He withdraws.*]

[LORD MONKHURST *enters. He is a young man about town of twenty-two, tall, hollow-chested, careless in his manners, very self-assured and properly bored.*]

MONK. I say, Webster.

WEBSTER. Good evening, my lord.

MONK. [*cheerfully*]. I suppose dinner's over?

WEBSTER [*looking at his watch*]. It's half-past ten, my lord.

MONK. Of course, they'll all say I'm late for dinner.

WEBSTER. Oh, no, my lord. Shall I order some dinner for your lordship?

MONK. No. Who's here now?

WEBSTER. Lady Monkhurst and Miss Muriel; Miss Rhead, Mrs. Samuel Sibley, and Mr. Richard Sibley.

MONK. Yes. I know *he's* here. Many people at the reception this afternoon?

WEBSTER. Droves, my lord.

MONK. I suppose these ghastly things are the presents?

WEBSTER. As your lordship says.

MONK. Dashed if I can understand why my grandfather should make such a fuss about his golden wedding. [*Very cheerfully.*] Was he very angry at me not turning up?

WEBSTER. Considering his age, no, my lord. I took the liberty of suggesting to him that this might be one of your busy

weeks, my lord, and that your lordship could never tell beforehand —

Monk. You're a clever chap, Webster. Why the devil did you leave the army?

Webster. Probably because, as your lordship says, I'm clever. There's more brains outside the army than in it, my lord. And like turns to like.

Monk. [*laughing in a superior way*]. Ha! ha! Really!

Webster. Fact is, I enlisted under a misapprehension, when I was in a temper. I have to thank your lordship's late father for helping me to reënter my old profession, and under the most auspicious circumstances.

Monk. Well, we could do with more fellahs like you. I've not yet found any serjeant to draw my sketch maps for me half as well as you used to.

[*He is looking over the tray with drinks.*]

Webster. Ah, my lord! Those half-guineas came in very handy, very handy. Glorious times, no doubt. But I would n't go back.

Monk. Bring me a benedictine, will you?

[Emily, *now* Lady Monkhurst, *forty-eight, enters by the double doors. She has developed into a handsome, well-preserved woman of the world. She wears an evening dress of rich brocade, and magnificent pearls.*]

Monk. Well, mater, I don't see much sign of the fatted calf.

Emily [*annoyed*]. Gerald, your poor father was witty; you are merely facetious. I wish you could cure yourself.

Monk. Now, what's the matter now?

Emily. What's the matter? You must needs choose your grandparents' golden wedding to go to Sandown. You promised me you'd be back early, at any rate in time for the tail end of the reception; and you don't even appear for dinner. Your grandfather is very displeased.

Monk. If a fellow keeps a stable, he keeps a stable. Somebody's got to look after the gees in these days. And then — [*Hesitates.*]

Emily. Please don't tell me your car broke down. I've heard that too often.

Monk. It did n't — this time.

Emily. Have you dined?

Monk. I have.

Emily. Whom with? [*Silence.*] One of your numerous "lady friends," I presume. Gerald, I'm ashamed of you.

Monk. You've no right to be ashamed of me. If you want to know, I dined at the House of Lords.

Emily. At the House of Lords?

Monk. At the House of Lords. They telephoned to me at Sandown to come up for an important division, and I was kept hanging about there till after ten o'clock. Jolly amusing place, the House of Lords.

Emily [*rather taken aback*]. Why did n't you tell me at first?

Monk. Because I just wanted to teach you a lesson, mater. You're always ragging me about something or other.

Emily. You might at least have telephoned.

Monk. When a chap's doing his duty to his country, he can't always think about telephoning.

Emily. My dear Gerald, if you mean to follow in your father's footsteps, nobody will be more delighted than your mother. There'd be nothing to prevent you from being Master of the Horse, if you chose. Only, my chick —

Monk. Only what?

Emily. You must alter your manner of living.

Monk. My manner of living, my dear mater, is my own affair. [*With meaning.*] If you'd leave me alone, and look after your other "chick" a little bit more —

Emily. What do you mean? Muriel?

Monk. Precisely. The Honourable Muriel.

Emily. Why?

Monk. Oh! I know Muriel can do no wrong. Still, I spotted her at the top of the stairs just now practically in the arms of the good Richard.

Emily. Richard!

Monk. [*intoning*]. And Samuel took to wife Nancy, and begat Richard. And Samuel passed away in the fulness of years

and his son Richard reigned in his stead. And Richard looked upon Muriel, and lo! she was beautiful in the eyes of Richard —

EMILY. Hush, Gerald! Are n't you mistaken? I've never seen the slightest thing —

MONK. That shows how blind you are, then! Of course I'm not mistaken.

EMILY. Are you sure?

MONK. Do you take me for a fool, mater?

EMILY [*positively*]. Richard, indeed! I shall put a stop to it.

MONK [*almost savagely*]. I should jolly well think you would.

[*Enter* WEBSTER *from the hall with a liqueur on a salver.* MONKHURST *takes it and drinks it slowly.*]

EMILY. Webster, will you kindly ask Miss Muriel to come here?

WEBSTER. Very good, my lady.

[*He goes out.* MONKHURST *nods knowingly to his mother as if to say, "Now you'll see!"* NANCY *enters by the double doors. She has grown into a rather red-faced plump, old woman of fifty-eight. She is good-natured, but is quick to retort. Her laugh is rather loud, her manner more definite than ever.*]

NANCY. Good evening, young man.

MONK. Good evening.

NANCY. So you've come at —

EMILY [*interrupting her*]. Aunt Nancy, I've just had to send for Muriel to come here.

NANCY. What's amiss?

EMILY. I — well — I hardly like —

MONK. Your excellent son Richard has been seen trying to kiss my sister.

NANCY. What was *she* doing?

EMILY. Well, that's not the point.

NANCY. And supposing he *was* trying to kiss Muriel?

EMILY. I must say, Aunt Nancy, you don't seem very surprised.

NANCY. Who *would* be? You invite young people to a golden wedding, and then you're startled when you catch 'em kissing. What else do you expect?

EMILY. I expect a good deal else.

NANCY. Then you're likely to be disappointed. As a matter of fact, I knew Richard was going to kiss Muriel to-night.

EMILY. Who told you?

NANCY. *He* did, of course. At least, he let out to me he was going to propose to her. He usually gets what he wants, you know.

EMILY [*angrily surprised*]. H'm!

MONK. [*very definitely*]. He won't get what he wants this time.

NANCY. Oh?

MONK. You must see that my sister can't marry an engineer.

NANCY. Well — why not an engineer? What are *you?* I can tell you what you might have been, if you had n't been born in the right bedroom: you might have been a billiard-marker. What have you done? Tell me a single thing you've done?

MONK. I've — oh! What tripe!

EMILY. Really, Aunt Nancy —

NANCY. Yes, my son *is* an engineer. And if you want to know what sort of an engineer he is, go to Mr. Arthur Preece.

MONK. [*disdainfully*]. Who's Preece?

NANCY [*imitating his tone*]. Ask your mother who *Preece* is.

EMILY [*self-consciously*]. Aunt Nancy!

NANCY [*continuing*]. You are n't old enough to remember Mr. Preece as an engineer, but, at any rate, you know he's in the House of Commons, whereas you're only in the House of Lords. And I'd like you to tell me where your grandfather'd have been last week with all his workmen on strike — but for Mr. Preece!

MONK. Oh, *that* Preece!

NANCY. Exactly. And it's that Preece that thinks the world of my son. My son's been out to Canada, and look how he got on in Winnipeg! And now he's going out again, whose capital is he taking but your grandfather's? I should like to see your grandfather trust *you* with thirty thousand pounds and a ticket to Canada.

MONK. I 'm in no need of capital, thank you.

NANCY. Lucky for you you are n't! My husband left me very badly off, poor man, but I could count on Richard. A pretty look-out for your mother if she'd had to count on you!

EMILY [*impatient*]. Really, Aunt Nancy —

NANCY [*nettled*]. Well, you leave my son alone.

[*Enter from the hall* MURIEL *and* RICHARD. MURIEL *is a handsome girl of twenty-four, rather thin and eager with a high forehead, and with much distinction. She has herself under absolute control.* RICHARD *is a tall, broad, darkish fellow of twenty-seven, with a clean-shaven heavy face and rough hair. He is very taciturn.*]

EMILY. Muriel, it was you that I asked for.

MURIEL [*quite calmly*]. We were both just coming to tell you.

EMILY. Tell me what?

MURIEL. We're engaged.

EMILY. Does Richard leave you to say this to me?

MURIEL. Well, you know he was never a great talker.

RICHARD. There it is — we're engaged.

NANCY [*to Muriel*]. How matter-of-fact you are, you girls, nowadays.

[*She caresses Richard.*]

MURIEL. Well, nobody seems strikingly enthusiastic here.

EMILY. I should think not. I don't like these underhand ways.

MURIEL. What underhand ways? Surely you did n't expect Richard to announce in advance the exact place and hour he was going to propose to me.

EMILY. Please don't try to imitate your dear father. You're worse than Gerald sometimes.

MURIEL. Oh, very well, mamma! What else?

EMILY. Do you mean to tell me you're seriously thinking of going to Canada — to Winnipeg — for the rest of your days?

MURIEL. Of course, mamma! I'm sure I shall be happier there than here.

EMILY. You'll leave England?

MURIEL. Certainly. Politics are much more satisfactory over there, except for woman's suffrage. All the questions that all the silly statesmen are still wrangling about here have been settled over there ages ago.

EMILY. My poor girl!

MURIEL. Mamma, I wish you would n't say "my poor girl."

EMILY. What have politics to do with happiness?

MURIEL. They have a great deal to do with mine. But, of course, what most attracts me is all those thousands of square miles of wheat fields, and Richard making reaping-machines for them. The day I first see one of Richard's new machines at work on a Canadian wheat-farm will be the happiest day of my life — except to-day.

NANCY [*amazed at these sentiments*]. Well, you're a caution.

MONK. [*with disgust*]. Why not marry an agricultural implement while you're about it?

RICHARD [*threateningly*]. You shut up!

MURIEL. But are n't you glad, mamma?

EMILY. I can't discuss the matter now.

MURIEL. But what is there to discuss?

EMILY [*after a pause*]. Muriel, I tell you at once, both of you, I shan't allow this marriage.

MURIEL. Not allow it? My poor mamma!

MONK. Certainly not.

RICHARD. I've told you to shut up once.

EMILY. And your grandfather won't allow it, either.

MURIEL. Of course, mamma, you and I have always been devoted to each other. You've made allowances for me, and I've made allowances for you. But you must please remember that we're in the year 1912. I've promised to marry Richard, and I shall marry him. There's no question of being "allowed." And if it comes to that, why should n't I marry him, indeed?

EMILY. You — your father's daughter, to think of going out to Winnipeg as the wife of a — your place is in London.

RICHARD [*stiffening at the sight of trouble*]. But I say, Cousin Emily —

MURIEL [*gently, but firmly*]. Richard, — please. [*Turning to her mother.*] Mamma, you really do shock me. Just because I'm the Honourable Muriel Pym! [*Laughs.*] I won't say you 're a snob, because everybody's a snob, in some way or other. But you don't understand the new spirit, not in

the least — and I'm so sorry. Why! Has n't it occurred to you even yet that the aristocracy racket's played out?

[ROSE *and* JOHN *enter by the double doors. They have both grown very old,* ROSE *being seventy-three and* JOHN *seventy-seven.* ROSE *has become short-sighted, white-haired and stoutish.* JOHN *has grown a little deaf; his hair is thin, his eyes sunken, his complexion of wax, his features sharply defined.* GERTRUDE *follows them, now seventy-three. She has grown into a thin shrivelled old woman, erect, hard with a high, shrill voice and keen, clear eyes.*]

ROSE. Oh! It's here they seem to be collected. [To MONKHURST.] Is that you, Gerald? Wherever has the poor lamb been? [*She kisses him.*]

MONK. Grandma, congratulations. [*To* JOHN.] Congratulations, sir.

JOHN [*sternly*]. Is this what you call good manners, boy?

MONK. Sorry, sir. I was kept.

JOHN [*sarcastically*]. Kept?

MONK. At the House of Lords. A division.

MURIEL. Good Heavens! Break it to us gently. Has his grandma's lamb gone into politics?

MONK. [*haughtily, ignoring his sister*]. They telephoned me from headquarters. I thought you would prefer me —

JOHN. Certainly, my boy. [*Shakes his hand.*] You could n't have celebrated our golden wedding in a fashion more agreeable to us than by recording your first vote in the House of Lords. Could he, granny?

ROSE [*feebly*]. Bless us! Bless us!

JOHN. What was the division?

MONK. [*mumbling*]. Er — the Trades Union Bill, sir. Third reading.

JOHN [*not hearing*]. What did you say?

MONK. [*louder*]. Trades Union Bill, sir.

MURIEL. Oh, my poor lamb! The Trades Union Bill division is n't to be taken till to-morrow!

MONK. [*hastily*]. What am I thinking of? It must have been the Extended Franchise Bill, then. . . . Anyhow, I voted.

JOHN [*coughing*]. H'm! H'm!

GERT. [*drawing a shawl round her shoulders, fretfully*]. Could n't we have that window closed?

ROSE. Auntie Gertrude, how brave you are! I dare n't have asked. I declare I'm a martyr to this ventilation in my old age.

GERT. I daresay I'm very old-fashioned, but when I was young we did n't try to turn a drawing-room into a park.

ROSE [*to* RICHARD, *as he closes the window*]. Thank you, Richard.

JOHN [*pettishly*]. Put a match to the fire, boy, and have done with it.

[RICHARD *goes to the fireplace, kneels down, and lights the fire.*]

GERT. What's the matter, Emily?

EMILY [*who has begun to weep*]. Oh, Auntie Gertrude!

NANCY [*soothingly*]. Come, come, Emily.

JOHN. What's that? What's that?

ROSE [*peering at* EMILY]. What is it, John?

JOHN. Monkhurst, have you been upsetting your mother again?

MURIEL. I think it's *us*, grandpapa.

JOHN. What does she say?

MURIEL. I'm afraid it's us — Richard and me. We're engaged to be married.

[MURIEL *points to* RICHARD, *who is still on his knees busy with the fire.*]

ROSE. Oh, my dear — how sudden! What a shock! What a shock! I can understand your mother crying. I must cry myself. Come and kiss me! It's astonishing how quietly you young people manage these things nowadays.

[*Embraces* MURIEL.]

JOHN. Who's engaged to be married? Who's engaged to be married?

RICHARD [*loudly, rising and dusting his hands*]. Muriel and I, sir.

JOHN. Mu — Mu — ! What the devil do you mean, sir? Emily, what in God's name are you thinking of?

EMILY [*whimpering*]. It's just as much of a surprise to me as to anybody. I don't approve of it.

MONK. I've told them already you would never approve, sir.

NANCY. You have n't, young man. It was your mother who told us that.

JOHN [*to Nancy*]. I asked you to my golden wedding, Nancy —

NANCY. You did, Sir John. I should n't have come without.

JOHN. Do you countenance this — affair?

NANCY. What's wrong with it?

ROSE [*timidly*]. Yes, John. What's wrong with it? Why should n't my Muriel marry her Richard?

JOHN. What's wrong with it, d' you say? What — !

EMILY [*passionately*]. I won't agree to it.

JOHN [*to* NANCY]. Nothing wrong with it, from your point of view. Nothing! [*Laughing.*] Only I sha'n't have it. I won't have it.

ROSE. Grandpa, why do you always try to cross me?

JOHN. I? You?

ROSE. I've been yielding to you in everything for fifty years. I think I'm old enough to have my own way now — just once.

JOHN [*startled*]. What's come over you?

ROSE. Nothing's come over me. But I really —

JOHN [*subduing her*]. Be silent, granny!

NANCY. We thought you thought very highly of Richard.

JOHN. So I do. But what's that got to do with it? It's nothing but this genius business over again.

NANCY. Genius business?

JOHN. Yes. I shall be told Richard 's a genius, therefore he must be allowed to marry Muriel. Nonsense! I had just the same difficulty with her mother twenty-six years ago. You ought to remember; you were there! Had n't I, Emily?

EMILY [*faintly*]. Yes.

JOHN [*not hearing*]. What's that?

EMILY. Yes, father. Yes.

JOHN. Of course I had. I would n't have it then, and I won't have it now. What? Here's a young fellow, a very smart engineer. Insists on going to Canada. Wants capital! Well, I give it him! I tell him he may go. Everything 's settled. And then, if you please, he calmly announces his intention of carrying off my grand-daughter — him!

ROSE. If she 's your grand-daughter, he 's my nephew.

JOHN [*glaring at her*]. Sh!

ROSE. No! I wo —

JOHN [*continuing, staring at* ROSE]. My grand-daughter has got to marry something very different from an engineer.

NANCY. If she did she might marry something that'll turn her hair grey a good deal sooner.

JOHN. I have my plans for Muriel.

EMILY. Imagine Muriel in Winnipeg!

MURIEL. What plans, granddad? You 've never told me about any plans.

JOHN. Not told you! At your age, your mother had a conspicuous place in London society. And it's your duty to carry on the family tradition. Your mother did n't marry into the peerage so that you could gallivant up and down Winnipeg as the wife of a manufacturing engineer. You have some notion of politics, though it's a mighty queer one —

MURIEL. I hardly think my politics would further your plan, granddad. I should have supposed the whole of my career would have made it plain that I have the greatest contempt for official politics.

JOHN. Your "career"! Your "contempt"! [*Laughs good-humouredly, then more softly.*] My child —

MURIEL [*nettled*]. I'm not a child.

JOHN [*angrily*]. Enough! Don't make yourself ridiculous. [*More quietly.*] Your mother and your brother think as I do. Let that suffice.

RICHARD. Pardon me, sir, but suppose it won't suffice?

JOHN [*furious*]. I — I —

MURIEL [*violently*]. Granddad, do please keep calm.

JOHN [*as above*]. I'm perfectly calm, I believe.

NANCY [*to* GERTRUDE]. Then he'd believe anything!

MURIEL. You don't seem to have understood that we're engaged to be married.

GERT. I must say —

JOHN. And what must *you* say? You'll side with my wife against me, and the girl's own mother, I suppose?

GERT. I fail to see any objection whatever.

JOHN. Do you, indeed! Well, objection or no objection, I mean it to be stopped — now, at once.

MURIEL. But how shall you stop it, granddad?

JOHN. If I hear one more word of this, one more word — there'll be no thirty thousand pounds for Richard. Not from me, at any rate. And I don't imagine that your mother will help him, or Monkhurst either. Where is he?

MONK. Not much.

MURIEL. But that won't stop it, granddad!

ROSE [*rising, and going to the hall door*]. John, you're a hard, hard old man. The one thing I ask of you, and on our golden wedding day, too, and you won't even listen. You shut me up as though I were a — a — I do think it's a shame. The poor things. [*She goes out in tears.*]

NANCY [*hurrying out after her*]. Rose! Rose! Don't!

JOHN. Here I arrange a nice little family dinner to celebrate the occasion. I invite no outsiders, so that we shall be nice and homely and comfortable. And this is how you treat me. You induce your grandmother to defy me — the first time in her life. You bring your mother to tears, and you —

EMILY. There's nothing to be said in favour of it — nothing. The very thought of it —

RICHARD. I'm awfully sorry.

JOHN. No, you are n't, sir. So don't be impudent.

[WEBSTER *enters.*]

WEBSTER. Mr. Arthur Preece, Sir John. I've shown him into the study.

JOHN. Very good. [WEBSTER *goes out.*]

GERT. Why can't Mr. Preece come up here?

JOHN. Because he's come to see me on private business, madam. Private, do I say? It's public enough. Everybody knows that I can't keep my own workmen in order without the help of a Labour M.P. The country's going to the dogs! My own father used to say so, and I never believed him. But it's true. [*He goes to the door.*]

MONK. May I come with you, sir? [*With a superior glance at* MURIEL.] These family ructions —

JOHN. Come!

[JOHN *goes off, followed by* MONKHURST.]

GERT. [*meaningly*]. Richard, go and see where your mother is, will you?

[RICHARD *follows the others. A slight pause.*]

EMILY [*still weakly and tearfully*]. How your poor grandmother is upset!

MURIEL. Yes, I'm very sorry.

EMILY. That's something.

MURIEL. It's such a humiliating sight. No real arguments. No attempt to understand *my* point of view! Nothing but blustering and bullying and stamping up and down. He wants to make out that I'm still a child with no will of my own. But it's he who's the child.

GERT. Come, come, Muriel.

MURIEL. Yes, it is. A spoilt child! When anything happens that does n't just please him, there's a fine exhibition of temper. Don't we all know it. And this is the great Sir John Rhead! Bah!

EMILY [*amazed*]. Muriel!

MURIEL. Oh, of course it is n't his fault! Everyone's always given him his own way — especially grandma. It's positively pathetic; grandma trying to turn against him now. Poor old thing! As if she could! Now!

EMILY. Muriel, your cold-bloodedness absolutely frightens me.

MURIEL. But, mother, I'm not cold-blooded. It's only common-sense.

GERT. [*clumsily caressing* EMILY]. Darling!

EMILY. Common-sense will be the finish of me; I've no one left in the world now.

GERT. [*hurt*]. Then I suppose I'm too old to count. And yet for nearly fifty years I've lived for nobody but you. Many and many a time I should have been ready to die — yes, glad to — only you were there.

EMILY [*affectionately*]. And yet you're against me now.

GERT. I only want you not to have any regrets.

EMILY. Any regrets! My life has been all regrets. Look at me.

GERT. Not all your life, dear — your marriage. [MURIEL *looks up.*]

EMILY [*firmly, and yet frightened with a look at* MURIEL]. Hush, auntie!

GERT. Why? Why should I hush? You say your life's been all regrets, if you care about being honest with Muriel, you ought to tell her now that you did not marry the man you were in love with.

EMILY [*in an outburst*]. Don't believe it, Muriel. No one could have been a kinder husband than your father was, and I always loved him.

MURIEL [*intimidated by these revelations of feeling*]. Mother!

GERT. Then what do you regret? You had an affection for Ned, but if you had loved him as you loved — the other one — what is there to regret? And now you seem to be doing your best to make regrets for Muriel — and — and — oh, Emily, why do you do it?

MURIEL [*moved, but controlling herself*]. Yes, mamma! Why? I'm sure I'm open to hear reason on any subject — even marriage.

EMILY [*blackly*]. Reason! Reason! There you are again! My child, you're my oldest, and I've loved you beyond everybody. You've never been attached to me. It is n't your fault, and I don't blame you. Things happen to be like that, that's all. You don't know how hard you are. If you did, you'd be ready to bite your tongue off. Here I am, with you and Gerald. Gerald is not bad at heart, but he 's selfish and he's a fool. I could never talk freely to him, as I do to you. One day he 'll be asking me to leave Berkeley Square, and I shall go and finish my days in the country. And here you calmly announce you're off to Canada, and you want my *reasons* for objecting! There's only one reason — all the others are nothing — mere excuses — and you could n't guess that one reason. You have to be told. If you cared for me, you would n't force me to the shame of telling you.

MURIEL [*whispering*]. Shame?

EMILY. Is n't it humiliating for a mother to have to tell her daughter, who never's even thought of it, that she cannot bear to lose her, — cannot bear? — Canada!

MURIEL [*throwing herself at her mother's knees*]. Mother, I'll never leave you!

[*She sobs, burying her face in her mother's lap.*]

GERT. [*softly*]. All this self-sacrifice is a sad mistake. [*To* MURIEL.] None of us can live for ever. When your mother is gone — what will you do then?

MURIEL [*climbing up and kissing her mother*]. I'll never leave you!

EMILY. My child!

GERT. [*gently*]. It's wrong of you, Emily! All wrong!

[ARTHUR PREECE *enters from the hall. His hair and moustache have grown grey. His expression and manner slightly disillusioned and cynical. In figure he is the same.*]

PREECE. Good evening.

MURIEL [*on seeing him, rises quickly rather like a school-girl*]. Good evening. [*She goes out rapidly.* PREECE *looks after her a little surprised.*]

EMILY [*at once the woman of the world*]. Good evening. You've soon finished your business with father.

PREECE [*puzzled by the appearance of things*]. Good evening. [*He shakes hands with* EMILY.] What is the matter? The old gentleman really was n't equal to seeing me. I just told him what I had to tell him about the strikers, and then he said I'd perhaps better come up here. I think he wanted to be alone.

EMILY. Poor dear!

PREECE. Nothing serious, I hope?

GERT. [*briskly, shaking* PREECE *by the hand*]. The usual thing, Mr. Preece, the usual thing! A new generation has got to the marrying age. You know what it is. I know what it is. Now, Emily, don't begin to cry again. People who behave as selfishly as you're doing have no right to weep — except for their sins.

EMILY [*protesting*]. Auntie, this can't possibly interest Mr. Preece.

GERT. [*still more briskly*]. Don't talk that kind of conventional nonsense, Emily! You know quite well it *will* interest Mr. Preece extremely. [*Rising.*] Now just tell him all about it and see what he says. [*With a*

peculiar tone.] I suppose you'll admit he ought to be a good judge of such matters? [*She moves to the door.*]

EMILY. Where are you going?

GERT. [*imitating* EMILY *slightly*]. That can't possibly interest you. [*Wearily.*] I'm out of patience. [*She goes out of the room.*]

EMILY [*trying to force a light tone*]. I hope you had some good news about the workmen for my poor old father. What a finish for his golden wedding day!

PREECE [*following her lead*]. Yes, I think his little affair's pretty well fixed up — anyhow for the present. He's shown himself pretty reasonable. If he'd continued to be as obstinate as he was at the start, the thing would have run him into a lot of money.

EMILY. I wonder he does n't retire.

PREECE. He's going to. There's to be a Limited Company.

EMILY. Father — a Limited Company! He told you?

PREECE. Yes.

EMILY. Then he must have been feeling it's getting too much for him.

PREECE. Well, considering his years — seventy-seven, is n't it? Some of us will be beaten long before that age. [*He sighs.*]

EMILY. Why that sigh? You are n't getting ready to give up, are you?

PREECE. No, I expect I shall go on till I drop.

EMILY. I should have thought you had every reason to be satisfied with what you have done.

PREECE. Why?

EMILY. Unless you regret giving up steel for politics.

PREECE. No. I don't regret that. I'd done all I really wanted to do there. I'd forced your father to take up steel on a big scale. I'd made more than all the money I needed. And other processes were coming along, better than mine.

EMILY. I wonder how many men there are who've succeeded as you have done, both in politics and out of politics.

PREECE. Do you think I've succeeded in politics?

EMILY. You have n't held office, but I've always understood it was because you preferred to be independent.

PREECE. It was. I could have sold my soul over and over again for a seat at an Under-Secretary's desk. I would n't even lead the Labour Party.

EMILY. But everyone knows you're the strongest man in the Labour Party.

PREECE. Well, if I am — the strongest man in the Labour Party is rather depressed.

EMILY. Why?

PREECE. Difficult to say. Twenty years ago, I thought the millennium would be just about established in 1912. Instead of that, it's as far off as ever. It's even further off.

EMILY. Further off?

PREECE. Yes. And yet a lot of us have worked. By God, we have! But there's a different spirit now. The men are bitter. They can't lead themselves and they won't be led. They won't be led. And nobody knows what's going to happen next. Except that trouble's going to happen. I often wonder why I was cursed with the reforming spirit. How much happier I should have been if I'd cared for nothing in this world but my own work — like young Richard Sibley, for instance.

EMILY. Is n't he interested in reform?

PREECE. Not he! He's an engineer, only an engineer. He minds his own business. I suppose he's here to-night.

EMILY. Yes.

PREECE [*in an ordinary tone*]. Why won't you let him marry Miss Muriel?

EMILY [*startled*]. Then father's told you?

PREECE. Not a word. But Richard and I are great pals. He's told me his plans. Why should n't they marry?

EMILY [*weakly*]. Muriel won't go to Canada.

PREECE. Won't go to Canada? But I understand she had a tremendous notion of Canada.

EMILY. She's promised me she won't go.

PREECE. But why should she do that?

EMILY [*half breaking down*]. Oh, I know I'm selfish. But — but — I should be quite alone, if she went. And then, it's not what we'd anticipated for her. We naturally hoped —

PREECE. Oh! Of course, if you're in the marriage market —

EMILY. No. Really it's not that — at least as far as I'm concerned. I should be so utterly alone. And she's promised me. If she deserted me —

PREECE. Deserted — rather a strong word —

EMILY. Please don't be hard! You don't know how unhappy I am. You admit you're discouraged.

PREECE. I said "depressed."

EMILY. Well, depressed, then. Can't you feel for others?

PREECE [*rather roughly*]. And who made me admit it? Who kept questioning me and worming it out of me? You would n't leave it alone. You're like all the other women — and I've had to do with a few.

EMILY [*affronted*]. Please —

PREECE. It is n't sufficient for you to make a man unhappy. You are n't satisfied till he admits you've made him unhappy.

EMILY [*protesting*]. Oh!

PREECE. How many times have I seen you since this cursed strike brought me among the family again? Half-a-dozen, perhaps. And every single time I've noticed you feeling your way towards it. And to-night you've just got there.

EMILY. Arthur, you must forgive me. It's quite true. We can't help it.

PREECE. What should I care about lost millenniums and labour troubles ahead, if I'd any genuine personal interest in my own? Not a jot. Not a tinker's curse! Do you remember you let me kiss you — once?

EMILY. Forgive me! I know I ought n't to be forgiven. But life's so difficult. Ever since I've been seeing you again I've realised how miserable I am — it's such a long time since. It seems as it was some other girl and not me — twenty-six years ago — here! And yet it's like yesterday. [*She sobs.*]

[PREECE *embraces her first roughly and then very tenderly.*]

PREECE. My child!

EMILY. I'm an old woman.

PREECE. You said it was like yesterday — when you were twenty-three — so it is.

[*They kiss again.*]

EMILY [*with a little laugh*]. This will kill father.

PREECE. Not it. Your father has a remarkable constitution. It's much more likely to kill the Labour Party.

[JOHN *enters, agitated and weary.*]

JOHN [*brusquely*]. Where's your mother? She's not in the other room. I thought she was in here. I want to see her.

EMILY. She's probably gone to her own room — poor dear!

JOHN. Can't you go and find her?

[*He sits down, discouraged.*]

EMILY [*coming over to him*]. Father, I've been thinking it over, and I'm afraid we shall have to agree to Muriel's marriage.

JOHN. We shall have to agree to it? I sha'n't agree to it.

EMILY. As Mr. Preece says —

JOHN. Mr. Preece?

EMILY. You know how friendly he is to Richard — as Mr. Preece says, why should n't they marry?

PREECE. I merely ventured to put the question, Sir John.

JOHN. Why should n't they? Because they should n't. Is n't that enough? [*To* EMILY.] A quarter of an hour ago you yourself agreed in the most positive way that there was nothing whatever to be said in favour of such a match.

EMILY. I was rather overlooking the fact that they're in love with each other — — [*glancing at* PREECE] — a quarter of an hour ago.

JOHN. Are all you women gone mad to-night? Preece, do you reckon *you* understand women?

PREECE. Now and then one gets a glimpse, sir.

JOHN [*realising state of affairs between* PREECE *and* EMILY]. H'm!

EMILY [*noticing her father watch her, rather self-consciously*]. After all, what difference can it make to us? We sha'n't be here as long as they will.

JOHN. What? What?

EMILY [*louder*]. We sha'n't be here as long as they will, I say.

JOHN. That's it! Tell me I'm an old man! Of course, it can't make any difference to us. I was looking at the matter solely from their point of view. How can it affect me — *whom* Muriel marries?

EMILY. Well, then! Let them judge for themselves. You agree? [JOHN *stares before him obstinately.*] Father — [JOHN *shakes his head impatiently.*] Dad!

JOHN [*looking up like a sulky child*]. Oh, have it your own way. I'm not the girl's mother. If you've made up your mind, there's nothing more to be said.

EMILY. And Richard's capital?

JOHN. Oh, it's all lying ready. [*Shrugs his shoulders.*] May as well have it, I suppose.

EMILY. You're a dear!

JOHN. I'm not a dear, and I hate to be called a dear.

EMILY. What a shocking untruth! I shall go and tell them, I think.

[*She goes to the door.*]

JOHN [*calling her back*]. Emily!

EMILY. Yes.

JOHN. Don't let them come in here. I could n't bear it.

EMILY. Oh, but —

JOHN. I could n't stand the strain of another scene. It's late now — I'm an old man, and people have no right to upset me in this way.

EMILY. Could n't they just say good-night?

JOHN. Very well. They must say good-night and go at once. Another day —

EMILY [*very soothingly*]. I'll tell them you're very tired.

[*She nods smilingly at her father and leaves the room. A slight pause.*]

PREECE. A difficult job, being the head of a family.

JOHN. I've done with it, Preece. I've decided that to-night — that's what a golden wedding comes to in these days. Things are n't what they were. In my time a man was at any rate master in his own house and on his own works. Seemed natural enough! But you've changed all that.

PREECE. I've changed it?

JOHN [*continuing confidentially*]. Why, even my own wife's gone against me to-night. My own wife! [*Troubled.*] Did you ever hear of such a thing?

PREECE. I *have* heard of it, Sir John.

JOHN [*grimly*]. You laugh. Wait till you're married.

PREECE. I may have to wait a long time.

JOHN. Eh, what? A long time? Don't try to hoodwink me, Preece. I know what you all say when I'm not there. "Old Rhead." "Be breaking up soon, the old man!" But I'm not yet quite doddering. [*Pointedly.*] You'll be married inside six months — and every newspaper in London will be full of it. Yes, answer that. My workmen go out on strike, and you poke your nose in and arrange it for me. Then my family go out on strike, and upon my soul, you poke your damned nose in there, too, and arrange that for me — on your own terms. Tut — tut! Shake hands, man! You and your like are running the world to the devil, and I'm too old to step in and knock you down. But — but — I wish you luck, my lad. You're a good sort.

[*They shake hands.*]

[EMILY, NANCY, MURIEL, RICHARD, *and* GERTRUDE *all enter from the hall.*]

PREECE. Well, good-night, Sir John.

EMILY [*cheerfully*]. We're just coming to say good-night, grandpapa. I'm sure you must be very tired. We've said good-night to granny.

JOHN [*feebly*]. Where is she? Where is granny?

NANCY [*heartily shaking hands*]. Good-night, John, and thank you for a very pleasant time.

[*She goes to* GERTRUDE, *who now stands near the door, and kisses her good-night.*]

RICHARD [*heartily shaking hands*]. Thank you, sir.

[NANCY *passes out by the door.* GERTRUDE *now shakes hands with* RICHARD, *who follows his mother.*]

EMILY [*kisses* JOHN]. Good-night, dear.

[JOHN *turning from* EMILY, *moves with a generous gesture to* MURIEL, *who, however, keeps a very stiff demeanour and shakes hands in cold silence.* EMILY *has reached* GERTRUDE. *They both watch* MURIEL.]

EMILY [*with a shade of disappointment turns to* GERTRUDE.] Good-night, auntie.

[GERTRUDE *and* EMILY *embrace.*

then EMILY *passes quickly out of the door.*]

JOHN [*stiffly, looking about*]. Where's Monkhurst?

GERT. Oh, he is gone! He said he had an appointment at the Club.

JOHN. What Club? The Carlton?

MURIEL [*shaking hands with* GERTRUDE]. The Automobile, you may depend.

[*She goes off by the door quickly.*]

GERT. Well, this day is over.

[WEBSTER *enters from the hall.*]

WEBSTER. Any orders, Sir John?

JOHN. None.

GERT. Can't we have some of the blaze of electricity turned off?

JOHN. As you like.

[WEBSTER *extinguishes several clusters with the switches at the door, then goes out. The room is left in a discreet light.*]

JOHN [*almost plaintively*]. Where's Rose?

[ROSE *enters timidly from the hall.*]

GERT. Here she is.

ROSE [*going up to* JOHN]. John, forgive me for having dared to differ from my dear husband.

JOHN [*taking her hand softly*]. Old girl — [*then half humorously shaking his head*] — you'll be the death of me, if you do it again.

GERT. I think I'm going to bed.

JOHN. No, not yet.

ROSE. Gertrude, will you do me a favour, on my golden wedding-day?

GERT. What is it?

ROSE. Sing for us.

GERT. Oh! My singing days are over long ago.

JOHN [*persuasively*]. Go on — go on. There's nobody but us to hear.

GERT. Really it is — [*Stops.*] Very well.

[GERTRUDE *goes through the double doors.* ROSE *draws her lace shawl round her.*]

JOHN. Let's sit by the fire if you're cold.

[*He moves a chair in place for her gallantly.* ROSE *sits to the left of the fire.* JOHN *takes a seat to the right of the fire. The song "Juanita" is heard in a cracked and ancient voice, very gently and faintly.*]

ROSE [*softly, by the fire*]. When I think of all this room has seen —

JOHN [*looking into the fire*]. Ah!

ROSE. I'm sure it's very pleasant to remember.

JOHN. Ah! That's because you're pleasant. I've said it before, and I say it again. The women of to-day are n't what women used to be. They're hard. They've none of the old charm. Unsexed — that's what they are — unsexed.

[MURIEL *enters quickly from the hall in a rich white cloak. She pauses smiling, then hurries delicately across to her grandfather and embraces him; releases him, shyly takes a flower from her bosom, drops it into his hand, turns and gives her grandmother a smile, whispering "Good-night. They're waiting for me," and hurries out again.*]

JOHN [*looking at the flower*]. We live and learn.

ROSE [*nodding her head*]. Yes, John.

[*The song continues.*]

CURTAIN

OUR BETTERS

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

By W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

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CHARACTERS

Lady Grayston
Duchesse de Surennes
Principessa Della Cercola
Elizabeth Saunders
Arthur Fenwick
Thornton Clay
Fleming Harvey
Antony Paxton
Lord Bleane
Pole
Ernest

The action of the play takes place at Lady Grayston's house in Grosvenor Street, Mayfair, and at her husband's place in Suffolk, Feathers Nevil

OUR BETTERS

ACT I

SCENE. *The drawing-room at* LADY GRAYSTON'S *house in Grosvenor Street, Mayfair. It is a sumptuous double room of the period of George II, decorated in green and gold, with a coromandel screen and lacquer cabinets, but the coverings of the chairs, the sofas and cushions, show the influence of Bakst and the Russian Ballet; they offer an agreeable mixture of rich plum, emerald green, canary and ultramarine. On the floor is a Chinese carpet, and here and there are pieces of Ming pottery.*

It is about half-past four, early in the season, and a fine day.

When the curtain rises, from the street below is heard the melancholy chant of the lavender man.

Sweet lavender!
Who will buy my lavender?
Twelve sticks for a penny.

BESSIE SAUNDERS *comes in. She is a very pretty American girl, of twenty-two, with fair hair and blue eyes. She is dressed in the latest mode. She wears a hat and gloves and carries a bag. She has just come in from the street. She has in hand a telephone message, and going over to the telephone she takes up receiver.*

BESSIE. Gerrard 4321. Is that the Berkeley? Put me through to Mr. Harvey, please. Fleming Harvey, that's right. [*She listens and smiles.*] Yes. Who d' you think it is? [*She laughs.*] I've just got your telephone message. Where have you sprung from? That 's fine. How long are you staying in London? I see. I want to see you at once. Nonsense. This very minute. Now jump into a taxi and come right away. Pearl will be in presently. Ring off, Fleming. No, I will not ring off first. [*A pause.*] Are you there? How tiresome you are. You might be halfway here by now. Well, hustle.

[*She puts down the receiver and begins to take off her gloves.*]

[POLE, *the butler, comes in with a bunch of roses.*]

POLE. These flowers have just come for you, Miss.

BESSIE. Oh! Thank you. Are n't they lovely? You must give me something to put them in, Pole.

POLE. I'll bring a vase, Miss.

[*He goes out. She buries her face in the flowers and inhales their fragrance.*]

[POLE *reënters with a bowl filled with water.*]

BESSIE. Thank you. You're sure they *are* for me? There's no label.

POLE. Yes, Miss. The person who brought them said they was for you, Miss I asked him if there was n't a card and he said no, Miss.

BESSIE [*with a faint smile*]. I think I know who they're from. [*She begins to arrange the flowers.*] Her ladyship has n't come in yet, has she?

POLE. Not yet, Miss.

BESSIE. D' you know if anyone is coming in to tea?

POLE. Her ladyship did n't say, Miss.

BESSIE. You'd better prepare for fifteen, then.

POLE. Very good, Miss.

BESSIE. I was being funny, Pole.

POLE. Yes, Miss? Shall I take the paper away, Miss?

BESSIE [*with a slight sigh of resignation*]. Yes, do, will you? [*The telephone rings.*] Oh, I forgot, I switched the telephone on here. See who it is.

[POLE *takes up the receiver and listens, then puts his hand over its mouth.*]

POLE. Will you speak to Lord Bleane, Miss?

BESSIE. Say I'm not at home.

POLE. Miss Saunders has n't come in yet. I beg pardon, my lord, I did n't recog-

nize your lordship's voice. [*A pause.*] Well, my lord, I did hear them say there was a private view they thought of going to at the Grosvenor. You might find Miss Saunders there.

BESSIE. You need n't elaborate, Pole.

POLE. I was only making it more convincing, Miss. [*Listening.*] I think so, my lord. Of course I could n't say for certain, my lord, they might have gone out to Ranelagh.

BESSIE. Really, Pole.

POLE. Very good, my lord. [*He puts down the receiver.*] His lordship asked if you was expected in to tea, Miss.

BESSIE. I see.

POLE. Is there anything else, Miss.

BESSIE. No, Pole, thank you.

[*He goes out. She finishes arranging the flowers.*]

[*The door is flung open and* LADY GRAYSTON *comes in followed by* FLEMING HARVEY. PEARL — LADY GRAYSTON — *is a handsome, dashing creature, a woman of thirty-four, with red hair and a complexion outrageously painted. She is dressed in a Paris frock, but of greater daring both in colour and cut than a Frenchwoman would wear.* FLEMING *is a nice-looking young American in clothes that were obviously made in New York.*]

PEARL. My dear Bessie, I've found an entirely strange young man on the doorstep who says he is a cousin.

BESSIE [*giving him her hands enthusiastically*]. Fleming!

FLEMING. I introduced myself to Lady Grayston. She drove up just as they were opening the door. Please reassure your sister, Bessie. She looks upon me with suspicion.

BESSIE. You must remember Fleming Harvey, Pearl.

PEARL. I've never set eyes on him in my life. But he looks quite nice.

BESSIE. He is.

FLEMING. I rang up five minutes ago and Bessie ordered me to come round right away.

PEARL. Well, make him stop to tea. I've got to telephone. I've suddenly remembered that I've asked twelve people to dinner.

BESSIE. Does George know?

PEARL. Who is George?

BESSIE. Don't be absurd, Pearl. George — your husband.

PEARL. Oh! I could n't make out who you meant. No, he does n't know. But what's much more important, the cook does n't know either. I'd forgotten George was in London. [*She goes out.*]

BESSIE. George generally dines out when Pearl is giving a party because he does n't like people he does n't know, and he seldom dines at home when we're alone because it bores him.

FLEMING. It does n't sound as if Sir George enjoyed many of the benefits of home life.

BESSIE. Now let's sit down and make ourselves comfortable. You are going to stay to tea, are n't you?

FLEMING. It's not a beverage that I am in the habit of imbibing.

BESSIE. When you've been in England a month you won't be able to do without it. When did you land?

FLEMING. This morning. You see, I've lost no time in coming to see you.

BESSIE. I should think not. It *is* good to see someone straight from home.

FLEMING. Have you been having a good time, Bessie?

BESSIE. Wonderful! Since the beginning of the season, except when Pearl has had people here, I've been out to lunch and dinner every day, and I've been to a ball every night, generally two, and sometimes three.

FLEMING. Gee!

BESSIE. If I stopped now I'd drop down dead.

FLEMING. D' you like England?

BESSIE. I adore it. I think it's too bad of popper never to have let me come over before. Rome and Paris are nothing. We're just trippers there, but here we're at home.

FLEMING. Don't get too much at home, Bessie.

BESSIE. Oh, Fleming, I never thanked

you for sending me the roses. It was perfectly sweet of you.

FLEMING [*with a smile*]. I did n't send any roses.

BESSIE. Did n't you? Well, why did n't you?

FLEMING. I had n't time. But I will.

BESSIE. It 's too late now. I naturally thought they were from you because Englishmen don't send flowers in the same way as American boys do.

FLEMING. Is that so?

[*There is a slight pause.* BESSIE *gives him a quick look.*]

BESSIE. Fleming, I want to thank you for that charming letter you wrote me.

FLEMING. There's no occasion to do that, Bessie.

BESSIE. I was afraid you might feel badly about it. But we'll always be the greatest friends, won't we?

FLEMING. Always.

BESSIE. After all you were eighteen when you asked me to marry you and I was sixteen. It was n't a very serious engagement. I don't know why we did n't break it off before.

FLEMING. I suppose it never occurred to us.

BESSIE. I'd almost forgotten it, but when I came over here I thought I'd better make everything quite clear.

FLEMING [*with a smile*]. Bessie, I believe you're in love.

BESSIE. No, I'm not. I tell you I'm having a wonderful time.

FLEMING. Well, who sent you the roses?

BESSIE. I don't know. Lord Bleane.

FLEMING. You're not going to marry a lord, Bessie?

BESSIE. Have you any objections?

FLEMING. Well, on first principles I think American girls had better marry American men, but then I happen to be an American man.

[BESSIE *looks at him for a moment.*]

BESSIE. Pearl gave a dinner party last night. I was taken in by a cabinet minister and on the other side of me I had an ambassador. Just opposite was a man who had been Viceroy in India. Madame Angelotti dined with us and she sang afterwards, and a lot of people came on from an official dinner in their stars and ribands. Pearl looked superb. She's a wonderful hostess, you know. Several people told me they would rather come here than to any house in London. Before Pearl married George Grayston she was engaged to a boy who was in business in Portland, Oregon.

FLEMING [*smiling*]. I see you're quite determined to marry a lord.

BESSIE. No, I'm not. I'm keeping an open mind on the subject.

FLEMING. What d' you mean by that?

BESSIE. Well, Fleming, it has n't escaped my notice that a certain noble lord is not unwilling to lay his beautiful coronet at my feet.

FLEMING. Don't talk like a novelette, Bessie.

BESSIE. But it feels like a novelette. The poor dear is trying to propose to me every time he sees me, and I'm doing all I can to prevent him.

FLEMING. Why?

BESSIE. I don't want to refuse him, and then wish I had n't.

FLEMING. You could easily make him ask you again. Women find that so simple.

BESSIE. Ah, but supposing he went right away to shoot big game in Africa. It's what they do, you know, in novelettes.

FLEMING. I'm reassured about one thing. You're not in the least in love with him.

BESSIE. I told you I was n't. You don't mind my saying all this to you, Fleming?

FLEMING. Gracious, no; why should I?

BESSIE. You're sure you don't feel sore at my throwing you over?

FLEMING [*cheerfully*]. Not a bit.

BESSIE. I am glad, because then I can tell you all about the noble lord.

FLEMING. Has it occurred to you that he wants to marry you for your money?

BESSIE. You can put it more prettily. You can say that he wants to marry me with my money.

FLEMING. And is that a prospect that allures you?

BESSIE. Poor dear, what else can he do? He's got a large place to keep up and he simply has n't a cent.

FLEMING. Really, Bessie, you amaze me.

BESSIE. I shan't when you've been here a month.

[PEARL *comes in.*]

PEARL. Now, Bessie, tell me all about this strange young man.

BESSIE. He's quite capable of telling you about himself.

PEARL [*to* FLEMING]. How long are you staying?

FLEMING. A couple of months. I want to see something of English life.

PEARL. I see. D' you want to improve your mind or d' you want to go into society?

FLEMING. I suppose I could n't combine the two.

PEARL. Are you rich?

FLEMING. Not at all.

PEARL. It does n't matter, you're good-looking. If one wants to be a success in London one must either have looks, wit, or a bank-balance. You know Arthur Fenwick, don't you?

FLEMING. Only by reputation.

PEARL. How superciliously you say that.

FLEMING. He provides bad food to the working classes of the United States at an exorbitant price. I have no doubt he makes a lot of money.

BESSIE. He's a great friend of Pearl's.

PEARL. When he first came over because they turned up their noses at him in New York, I said to him, my dear Mr. Fenwick, you're not good-looking, you're not amusing, you're not well-bred, you're only rich. If you want to get into society you must spend money.

FLEMING. It was evidently in the nature of a straight talk.

BESSIE. We must do what we can for Fleming, Pearl.

PEARL [*with a chuckle*]. We'll introduce him to Minnie Surennes.

FLEMING. Who in the world is she?

PEARL. The Duchesse de Surennes. Don't you remember? She was a Miss Hodgson. Chicago people. Of course they're nobody in America, but that does n't matter over here. She adores good-looking boys, and I dare say she's getting rather tired of Tony. [*To* BESSIE.] By the way, they're coming in this afternoon.

BESSIE. I don't like Tony.

PEARL. Why not? I think he's charming. He's the most unprincipled ruffian I ever met.

FLEMING. Is Tony the duke?

PEARL. What duke? Her husband? Oh, no, she divorced him years ago.

BESSIE. I think Fleming would like the Princess much better.

PEARL. Oh, well, he'll meet her here to-day also.

BESSIE. She was a Miss van Hogg, Fleming.

FLEMING. Was she divorced too?

PEARL. Oh, no, her husband's an Italian. It's very difficult to get a divorce in Italy. She's only separated. She's quite nice. She's one of my greatest friends. She bores me a little.

[POLE *comes in to announce* THORNTON CLAY *and then goes out.* THORNTON CLAY *is a stout American with a bald head and an effusive manner. He is somewhat overdressed. He speaks with a marked American accent.*]

POLE. Mr. Thornton Clay.

CLAY. How d' you do?

PEARL. You're the very person we want, Thornton. An entirely strange young man has suddenly appeared on my doorstep and says he's my cousin.

CLAY. My dear Pearl, that is a calamity which we Americans must always be prepared for.

BESSIE. I won't have you say such things, Mr. Clay. Fleming is not our only cousin, but he's my very oldest friend, are n't you, Fleming?

PEARL. Bessie has a charming nature. She really thinks that friendship puts one under an obligation.

FLEMING. Since you're talking of me, won't you introduce me to Mr. Clay.

PEARL. How American you are.

FLEMING [*smiling*]. It's not unnatural, is it?

PEARL. We have n't over here the passion that you have in America for introducing people. My dear Thornton, allow

me to present to you my long-lost cousin, Mr. Fleming Harvey.

CLAY. It's so long since I was in America that I almost forget, but I believe the proper answer to that is — Mr. Fleming Harvey, I'm pleased to make your acquaintance.

FLEMING. Are n't you an American, Mr. Clay?

CLAY. I won't deny that I was born in Virginia.

FLEMING. I beg your pardon, I thought from the way you spoke . . .

CLAY [*interrupting*]. But of course my home is London.

PEARL. Nonsense, Thornton, your home is wherever there's a first-class hotel.

CLAY. I went to America seven years ago. My father died and I had to go and settle up his affairs. Everyone took me for an Englishman.

FLEMING. That must have gratified you very much, Mr. Clay.

CLAY. Of course I have n't a trace of an American accent. I suppose that was the reason. And then my clothes.

[*He looks down at them with satisfaction.*]

PEARL. Fleming wants to see life in London, Thornton. He can't do better than put himself under your wing.

CLAY. I know everyone who's worth knowing. I can't deny that.

PEARL. Thornton calls more countesses by their Christian names than any man in town.

CLAY. I'll get him cards for some good balls and I'll see that he's asked to one or two of the right parties.

PEARL. He's good-looking and I'm sure he dances well. He'll be a credit to you, Thornton.

CLAY [*to* FLEMING]. But of course there's really nothing I can do for you. At Lady Grayston's you are in the very hub of society. I don't mean the stuffy, old-fashioned society that goes out in barouches and bores itself stiff, but the society that counts, the society that figures in the newspapers. Pearl is the most wonderful hostess in London.

PEARL. What do you want, Thornton?

CLAY. In this house, sooner or later, you'll meet every remarkable man in England except one. That is Sir George. And he's only remarkable because he's her husband.

PEARL [*with a chuckle*]. I might have known you were only saying a pleasant thing in order to make the next one more disagreeable.

CLAY. Of course I can't make out why you never ask George to your parties. Personally I like him.

PEARL. That's all the nicer of you, Thornton, since he always speaks of you as that damned snob.

CLAY [*with a shrug of the shoulders*]. Poor George, he has such a limited vocabulary. I met Flora della Cercola at luncheon today. She told me she was coming to tea with you.

PEARL. She's getting up a concert in aid of something or other and she wants me to help her.

CLAY. Poor Flora with her good works! She takes philanthropy as a drug to allay the pangs of unrequited love.

PEARL. I always tell her she'd do much better to take a lover.

CLAY. You'll shock Mr. Harvey.

PEARL. It won't hurt him. It'll do him good.

CLAY. Did you ever know her husband?

PEARL. Oh, yes, I met him. Just the ordinary little Dago. I cannot imagine why she should ever have been in love with him. She's an extraordinary creature. D' you know, I'm convinced that she's never had an affair.

CLAY. Some of these American women are strangely sexless.

FLEMING. I have an idea that some of them are even virtuous.

PEARL [*with a smile*]. It takes all sorts to make a world.

[POLE *enters to announce the* DUCHESSE DE SURENNES *and then goes out.*]

POLE. The Duchesse de Surennes.

[*The* DUCHESSE *is a large dark woman of forty-five with scarlet lips and impudently painted cheeks, a woman of opulent form,*

bold, self-assured, and outrageously sensual. She suggests a drawing of a Roman emperor by Aubrey Beardsley. She is gowned with a certain dashing magnificence, and wears a long string of large pearls round her neck. During the conversation POLE *and two footmen bring in tea and place it in the back drawing-room.*]

PEARL. My dear, how nice of you to come.

DUCHESSE. Is n't Tony here?

PEARL. No.

DUCHESSE. He said he was coming straight here.

PEARL. I daresay he's been delayed.

DUCHESSE. I can't understand it. He telephoned a quarter of an hour ago that he was starting at once.

PEARL [*reassuringly*]. He'll be here presently.

DUCHESSE [*with an effort over herself*]. How pretty you're looking, Bessie. No wonder all the men I meet rave about you.

BESSIE. Englishmen are so shy. Why don't they rave *to* me?

DUCHESSE. They'll never let you go back to America.

PEARL. Of course she's never going back. I'm determined that she shall marry an Englishman.

CLAY. She'll make a charming addition to our American peeresses.

PEARL. And there'll be another that you can call by her Christian name, Thornton.

BESSIE. I wish you would n't talk as if I had n't a word to say in the matter.

CLAY. Of course you've got a word to say, Bessie, a very important one.

BESSIE. Yes, I suppose.

CLAY. Exactly.

PEARL. Pour out the tea, darling, will you?

BESSIE. Surely. [*To* CLAY.] I know you don't share Fleming's contempt for tea, Mr. Clay.

CLAY. I could n't live a day without it. Why, I never travel without a tea basket.

FLEMING [*ironically*]. Is that so?

CLAY. You Americans who live in America . . .

FLEMING [*under his breath*]. So queer of us.

CLAY. Despise the delectable habit of drinking tea because you are still partly barbarous. The hour that we spend over it is the most delightful of the day. We do not make a business of eating as at luncheon or dinner. We are at ease with ourselves. We toy with pretty cakes as an excuse for conversation. We discuss the abstract, our souls, our morals; we play delicately with the concrete, our neighbour's new bonnet or her latest lover. We drink tea because we are a highly civilized nation.

FLEMING. I must be very stupid, but I don't follow.

CLAY. My dear fellow, the degree of a nation's civilization is marked by its disregard for the necessities of existence. You have gone so far as to waste money, but we have gone farther; we waste what is infinitely more precious, more transitory, more irreparable, we waste time.

DUCHESSE. My dear Thornton, you fill me with despair. Compton Edwardes has cut me off my tea. I thought he was only depriving me of a luxury, now I see he's depriving me also of a religious rite.

FLEMING. Who in Heaven's name is Compton Edwardes that he should have such right?

PEARL. My dear Fleming, he's the most powerful man in London. He's the great reducer.

FLEMING. Gracious! What does he reduce?

PEARL. Fat!

DUCHESSE. He's a perfect marvel, that man. Do you know, the Duchess of Arlington told me he'd taken nine pounds off her.

PEARL. My dear, that's nothing. Why, Lady Hollington gave me her word of honour she'd lost over a stone.

BESSIE [*from the tea-table*]. Anyone who wants tea must come and fetch it.

[*The men saunter over to the next room, while* PEARL *and the* DUCHESSE *go on with their conversation.*]

DUCHESSE. Who is that nice-looking young man, Pearl?

PEARL. Oh, he's a young American. He pretends to be a cousin of mine. He's come to see Bessie.

DUCHESSE. Does he want to marry her?

PEARL. Good Heavens, I hope not. He's only an old friend. You know the funny ways they have in America.

DUCHESSE. I suppose nothing is really settled about Harry Bleane.

PEARL. No. But I should n't be surprised if you saw an announcement in *The Morning Post* one day.

DUCHESSE. Has she enough money for him?

PEARL. She has a million.

DUCHESSE. Not pounds?

PEARL. Oh, no, dollars.

DUCHESSE. That's only eight thousand a year. I should n't have thought he'd be satisfied with that.

PEARL. People can't expect so much nowadays. There won't be any more enormous heiresses as there were in your time. Besides, Harry Bleane is n't such a catch as all that. Of course it's better to be an English baron than an Italian count, but that's about all you can say for it.

DUCHESSE. Of course she'll accept him?

PEARL. Oh, yes, she's crazy to live in England. And as I tell her, it's quite pleasant to be a peeress even now.

DUCHESSE. What on earth can have happened to Tony?

PEARL. My dear, he's not likely to have been run over by a motor-bus.

DUCHESSE. I'm not afraid of motor-buses running over him. I'm afraid of him running after Gaiety girls.

PEARL [*drily*]. I should have thought you kept a very sharp eye on him.

DUCHESSE. You see, he has n't got anything to do from morning till night.

PEARL. Why does n't he get a job?

DUCHESSE. I've been trying to get him something, but it's so difficult. You've got such a lot of influence, Pearl, can't you do something? I should be so grateful.

PEARL. What can he do?

DUCHESSE. Anything. And as you know he's very good-looking.

PEARL. Does he know French and German?

DUCHESSE. No, he has no gift for languages.

PEARL. Can he type and write shorthand?

DUCHESSE. Oh, no, poor dear, you can hardly expect that.

PEARL. Can he do accounts?

DUCHESSE. No, he has no head for figures.

PEARL [*reflectively*]. Well, the only thing I can see that he'd do for is a government office.

DUCHESSE. Oh, my dear, if you could only manage that. You can't think what a comfort it would be for me to know that he could n't get into mischief at least from ten to four every day.

[POLE *announces* TONY PAXTON. TONY *is a handsome youth of twenty-five, in beautiful clothes, with engaging manners and a charming smile.*]

POLE. Mr. Paxton.

PEARL. Well, Tony, how is life?

TONY. Rotten. I have n't backed a winner or won a rubber this week.

PEARL. Ah, well, that's the advantage of not having money; you can afford to lose it.

DUCHESSE [*bursting in*]. Where have you been, Tony?

TONY. I? Nowhere.

DUCHESSE. You said you were coming straight here. It does n't take twenty-five minutes to get here from Dover Street.

TONY. I thought there was n't any hurry. I was just hanging about the club.

DUCHESSE. I rang up the club again and they said you'd gone.

TONY [*after a very slight pause*]. I was downstairs having a shave and I suppose they never thought of looking for me in the barber's shop.

DUCHESSE. What on earth did you want to be shaved for at half-past four in the afternoon?

TONY. I thought you'd like me to look nice and clean.

PEARL. Go and get Bessie to give you some tea, Tony; I'm sure you want it after

the strenuous day you've had. [*He nods and walks into the inner room.*] Minnie, how can you be so silly? You can't expect to keep a man if you treat him like that.

DUCHESSE. I know he's lying to me; there's not a word of truth in anything he says, but he's so slim I can never catch him out. Oh, I'm so jealous.

PEARL. Are you really in love with him?

DUCHESSE. He's everything in the world to me.

PEARL. You should n't let yourself be carried away like this.

DUCHESSE. I'm not cold-blooded like you.

PEARL. You seem to have a passion for rotters, and they always treat you badly.

DUCHESSE. Oh, I don't care about the others. Tony is the only one I've ever really loved.

PEARL. Nonsense! You were just as much in love with Jack Harris. You did everything in the world for him. You taught him to wear his clothes. You got him into society. And the moment he could do without you he chucked you. Tony will do just the same.

DUCHESSE. I'm not going to be such a fool this time. I'm going to take care he can't do without me.

PEARL. I can't imagine what you see in him. You must know that . . .

DUCHESSE [*interrupting*]. There's very little I don't know. He's a liar, a gambler, an idler, a spendthrift, but in his way he is fond of me. [*Appealingly.*] You can see he's fond of me, can't you?

PEARL. He's so much younger than you, Minnie.

DUCHESSE. I can't help it. I love him.

PEARL. Oh, well, I suppose it's no good talking. As long as he makes you happy.

DUCHESSE. He does n't. He makes me miserable. But I love him. . . . He wants me to marry him, Pearl.

PEARL. You're not going to?

DUCHESSE. No. I won't be such a fool as that. If I married him I'd have no hold over him at all.

[*Enter* POLE *to announce the* PRINCESS DELLA CERCOLA. *She is a tall, thin woman of thirty-five with a pale, haggard face and great dark eyes. She is a gentle, kind creature, but there is something pathetic, almost tragic in her appearance. She is dressed, though very well and obviously by a Paris dressmaker, more quietly than the* DUCHESSE *or* PEARL. *She has not only wealth, but distinction.*]

POLE. Princess della Cercola. [*Exit.*]

[PEARL *gets up to receive her. They kiss.*]

PEARL. Darling.

PRINCESS. D' you hate me for coming to bother you? I rang up because I know how difficult you are to catch. [*Kissing the* DUCHESSE.] How are you, Minnie?

DUCHESSE. Don't ask me for a subscription, Flora. I'm so poor.

PRINCESS [*smiling*]. Wait till I tell you what it's for and then you'll remember that you had a father called Spender Hodgson.

DUCHESSE [*with a little groan*]. As if I wanted to be reminded of it.

PEARL. You're so absurd, Minnie. You should make a joke of the pork. I always tell people about father's hardware store, and when I have n't got a funny story I invent one.

PRINCESS. You've made your father quite a character in London.

PEARL. That's why I never let him come over. He could n't possibly live up to his reputation.

[FLEMING HARVEY *comes forward from the inner room.*]

FLEMING. I'm going to say good-bye to you.

PEARL. You must n't go before I've introduced you to Flora. Flora, this is Mr. Fleming Harvey. He's just come from America. He probably carries a six-shooter in his hip-pocket.

FLEMING. I'm told I may n't say I'm pleased to make your acquaintance, Princess.

PRINCESS. When did you land?

FLEMING. This morning.

PRINCESS. I envy you.

FLEMING. Because I landed this morning?

PRINCESS. No, because a week ago you were in America.

DUCHESSE. Flora!

FLEMING. I was beginning to think it was something to be rather ashamed of.

PRINCESS. Oh, you must n't pay any attention to Pearl and the Duchesse. They 're so much more English than the English.

PEARL. I notice you show your devotion to the country of your birth by staying away from it, Flora.

PRINCESS. Last time I was in America it made me so unhappy that I vowed I'd never go there again.

DUCHESSE. I was there ten years ago, when I was divorcing Gaston. I had n't been in America since my marriage and I'd forgotten what it was like. Oh, it was so crude! Oh, it was so provincial! You don't mind my saying so, Mr. Harvey?

FLEMING. Not at all. You're just as American as I am and there's no reason why among ourselves we should n't abuse the mother that bore us.

DUCHESSE. Oh, but I don't look upon myself as an American. I'm French. After all, I have n't a trace of an American accent. To show you how it got on my nerves, I almost did n't divorce Gaston because I thought I could n't bring myself to stay in America long enough.

PRINCESS. It's not because it was crude and provincial that I was unhappy in America. And Heaven knows, Boston is n't either. I was unhappy because after all it was home, the only real home I've ever had, and I was a stranger.

PEARL. My dear Flora, you're being very sentimental.

PRINCESS [*smiling*]. I'm sorry, I apologize. You're a New Yorker, Mr. Harvey?

FLEMING. I'm proud of it, madam.

PRINCESS. New York's wonderful, is n't it? It has something that no other city in the world has got. I like to think of Fifth Avenue on a spring day. The pretty girls in their smart frocks and neat shoes who trip along so gaily, and all the good-looking boys.

DUCHESSE. I grant that; some of the boys are too lovely for words.

PRINCESS. Everyone is so strong and confident. There's such an exaltation in the air. You feel in the passers-by a serene and unshakeable belief in the future. Oh, it's very good to be alive in Fifth Avenue on a sunny day in April.

FLEMING. It's good for an American to hear another American say such pleasant things about his country.

PRINCESS. You must come and see me, and you shall tell me all the news of home.

PEARL. How high the newest building is and how much money the latest millionaire has got.

FLEMING. Good-bye.

PEARL. Have you made friends with Thornton Clay?

FLEMING. I hope so.

PEARL. You must get him to give you the address of his tailor.

FLEMING. Are n't you pleased with my clothes?

PEARL. They 're very American, you know.

FLEMING. So am I.

[THORNTON CLAY *comes forward. The* DUCHESSE *strolls over to the inner room and is seen talking with* BESSIE *and* TONY PAXTON.]

PEARL. Thornton, I was just telling Mr. Harvey that you'd take him to your tailor.

CLAY. I was going to suggest it.

FLEMING. My clothes are not at all a success.

PEARL. Who d' you go to? Schultz?

CLAY. Of course. He's the only tailor in London. [*To* FLEMING.] Between ourselves, he was born in Hamburg, but we can't possibly do without him, so when he suddenly discovered he was a Swiss we fell on his neck and blessed him for the inspiration.

FLEMING. I'm pleased, at all events, to think it's a German tailor who's going to make me look like an Englishman.

[*He goes out.* THORNTON *makes his farewells.*]

CLAY. Good-bye, Pearl.

PEARL. Are you going? Don't forget you're coming down to Feathers on Saturday.

CLAY. I won't, indeed. I adore your week-end parties, Pearl. I'm so exhausted by Monday morning that I'm fit for nothing for the rest of the week. Good-bye.

[*He shakes hands and goes out. As he is going,* POLE *opens the door to announce* LORD BLEANE. *He is a very young man, very English in appearance, pleasant, clean and well groomed.*]

POLE. Lord Bleane. [*Exit.*]

PEARL. Dear Harry, how nice of you to come.

BLEANE. I'm in absolute despair.

PEARL. Good Heavens, why?

BLEANE. They're sending a mission to Russia to hand the Garter to some big wig and I've got to go with it.

PEARL. Oh, but that'll be very interesting.

BLEANE. Yes, but we start to-morrow and I shan't be able to come down to Feathers on Saturday.

PEARL. When do you come back?

BLEANE. In four weeks.

PEARL. Then come down to Feathers the Saturday after that.

BLEANE. May I?

PEARL. You must go and break the news to Bessie. She was so looking forward to your visit.

BLEANE. D' you think she'll give me some tea?

PEARL. I have no doubt, if you ask her nicely. [*He goes over to the inner room.*]

PRINCESS. Now I've got you to myself for two minutes. You will help me with my concert, won't you?

PEARL. Of course. What do you want me to do? I'll make Arthur Fenwick take any number of tickets. You know how charitable he is.

PRINCESS. It's for a very good cause.

PEARL. I'm sure it is. But don't harrow me with revolting stories of starving children. I'm not interested in the poor.

PRINCESS [*smiling*]. How can you say that?

PEARL. Are you? I often wonder if your philanthropy is n't an elaborate pose. You don't mind my saying that, do you?

PRINCESS [*good-humouredly*]. Not at all. You have no heart, and you can't imagine that anyone else should have.

PEARL. I have plenty of heart, but it beats for people of my own class.

PRINCESS. I've only found one thing really worth doing with all this money I have and that is to help a little those who need help.

PEARL [*with a shrug*]. So long as it makes you happy.

PRINCESS. It does n't, but it prevents me from being utterly miserable.

PEARL. You make me so impatient, Flora. You've got more money than you know what to do with. You're a princess. You've practically got rid of your husband. I cannot imagine what more you want. I wish I could get rid of mine.

PRINCESS [*smiling*]. I don't know what you've got to complain of in George.

PEARL. That's just it. I should n't mind if he beat me or made love to chorus girls. I could divorce him then. Oh, my dear, thank your stars that you had a husband who was grossly unfaithful to you. Mine wants me to live nine months of the year in the country and have a baby every five minutes. I did n't marry an Englishman for that.

PRINCESS. Why did you marry him?

PEARL. I made a mistake. I'd lived all my life in New York. I was very ignorant. I thought a baronet was quite important.

PRINCESS. I often wonder if you're happy, Pearl.

PEARL. Do you? Of course I'm happy.

PRINCESS. An ambassador told me the other day that you were the most powerful woman in London. It's very wonderful how you've made your way. You had nothing very much to help you.

PEARL. Shall I tell you how it was done? By force of character, wit, unscrupulousness, and push.

PRINCESS [*smiling*]. You're very frank.

PEARL. That has always been my pose.

PRINCESS. I sometimes think there's positive genius in the way you've ignored the snubs of the great.

PEARL [*with a chuckle*]. You're being very unpleasant, Flora.

PRINCESS. And there's something very

like heroism in the callousness with which you've dropped people when they've served your turn.

PEARL. You're driving me to the conclusion that you don't altogether approve of me.

PRINCESS. On the other hand, I can't help admiring you. You've brought all the determination, insight, vigour, strength, which have made our countrymen turn America into what it is, to get what you wanted. In a way your life has been a work of art. And what makes it more complete is that what you've aimed at is trivial, transitory, and worthless.

PEARL. My dear Flora, people don't hunt in order to catch a fox.

PRINCESS. Sometimes does n't it make you rather nervous, when you're sitting on the top of your ladder, in case anyone should give it a kick as he passes?

PEARL. It'll want more than a kick to topple my ladder over. D' you remember when that silly woman made such a fuss because her husband was in love with me? It was n't till I just escaped the divorce court that the duchesses really took me up.

[*The* DUCHESSE *comes forward with* TONY PAXTON.]

DUCHESSE. We really must be going, Pearl. I expect my masseur at six. Compton Edwardes told me about him. He's wonderful, but he's so run after, if you keep him waiting a moment he goes away.

PEARL. My dear, do be careful. Nancy Hallam got herself down to a mere nothing, but it made her look a hundred.

DUCHESSE. Oh, I know, but Compton Edwardes has recommended to me a wonderful woman who comes every morning to do my face.

PEARL. You are coming to my ball, are n't you?

DUCHESSE. Of course we're coming. Yours are almost the only parties in London where one amuses oneself as much as at a night club.

PEARL. I'm having Ernest to come in and dance.

DUCHESSE. I thought of having him one evening. How much does he charge for coming in socially?

PEARL. Twenty guineas.

DUCHESSE. Good Heavens, I could never afford that.

PEARL. What nonsense! You're far richer than I am.

DUCHESSE. I'm not so clever, darling. I can't think how you do so much on your income.

PEARL [*amused*]. I'm a very good manager.

DUCHESSE. One would never think it. Good-bye, dear. Are you coming, Tony?

[*She goes out.*]

TONY. Yes. [*Shaking hands with* PEARL.] I've not had a word with you to-day.

PEARL [*chaffing him*]. What are we to do about it?

PRINCESS. I must get Minnie to go to my concert. Minnie. [*She goes out.*]

[TONY *is left face to face with* PEARL.]

TONY. You're looking perfectly divine to-day. I don't know what there is about you.

PEARL [*amused, but not disconcerted*]. It is nice of you to say so.

TONY. I simply have n't been able to take my eyes off you.

PEARL. Are you making love to me?

TONY. That's nothing new, is it?

PEARL. You'll get into trouble.

TONY. Don't be disagreeable, Pearl.

PEARL. I don't remember that I ever told you you might call me Pearl.

TONY. It's how I think of you. You can't prevent me from doing that.

PEARL. Well, I think it's very familiar.

TONY. I don't know what you've done to me. I think of you all day long.

PEARL. I don't believe it for a minute. You're an unprincipled ruffian, Tony.

TONY. Do you mind?

PEARL [*with a chuckle*]. Shameless creature. I wonder what it is that Minnie sees in you.

TONY. I have all sorts of merits.

PEARL. I'm glad you think so. I can only discover one.

TONY. What is that?

PEARL. You're somebody else's property.

TONY. Oh!

PEARL [*holding out her hand*]. Good-bye. [*He kisses her wrist. His lips linger. She looks at him from under her eyelashes.*] It does n't make you irresistible, you know.

TONY. There's always the future.

PEARL. The future's everybody's property.

TONY [*in an undertone*]. Pearl.

PEARL. Be quick and go. Minnie will be wondering why you don't come. [*He goes out.* PEARL *turns away with a smile.* BESSIE *and* LORD BLEANE *advance into the room.*] Has Harry broken the news to you that he can't come down to us on Saturday?

[*The* PRINCESS *comes in.*]

PRINCESS. I've got my subscription.

PEARL. I kept Tony up here as long as I could so as to give you a chance.

PRINCESS [*with a laugh*]. That was really tactful.

PEARL. Poor Minnie, she's as mean as cat's meat [*with a glance at* BESSIE *and* LORD B.]. If you'd like to come down to the morning room we can go through my visitors' book and see who'll be useful to you.

PRINCESS. Oh, that would be kind of you.

PEARL [*to* BLEANE]. Don't go till I come back, will you? I have n't had a word with you yet.

BLEANE. All right.

[PEARL *and* PRINCESS *go out.*]

BESSIE. I wonder if you sent those flowers, Lord Bleane.

BLEANE. I did. I thought you would n't mind.

BESSIE. It was very kind of you.

[*She takes two of the roses and puts them in her dress.* BLEANE *is overcome with shyness. He does not know how to begin.*]

BLEANE. D' you mind if I light a cigarette?

BESSIE. Not at all.

BLEANE [*as he lights it*]. D' you know, this is the first time I've ever been alone with you. It was very tactful of Lady Grayston to leave us.

BESSIE. I'm not sure if it was n't a trifle too tactful.

BLEANE. I was hoping most awfully to have the chance of getting a talk with you.

[*The song of the lavender man is heard again in the street.* BESSIE *welcomes the diversion.*]

BESSIE. Oh, listen, there's the lavender man come back again. [*She goes to the window and listens.*] Throw him down a shilling, will you?

BLEANE. All right.

[*He takes a coin from his pocket and throws it into the street.*]

BESSIE. I seem to feel all the charm of England in that funny little tune. It suggests cottage gardens and hedges and winding roads.

BLEANE. My mother grows lavender at home. When we were kids we were all made to pick it and my mother used to put it in little muslin bags and tie them on with pink ribbon. And she used to put them under the pillows of one's bed and in all the drawers. Shall I ask her to send you some bags?

BESSIE. Oh, that would be such a bother for her.

BLEANE. It would n't. She'd like to. And, you know, it's not like the lavender you buy. It knocks spots off everything you can get in shops.

BESSIE. You must hate leaving London at this time of year.

BLEANE. Oh, I'm not very keen on London. [*Making a dash for it.*] I hate leaving you.

BESSIE [*in comic desperation*]. Let's not talk about me, Lord Bleane.

BLEANE. But that's the only topic that occurs to me.

BESSIE. There's always the weather in England.

BLEANE. You see, I'm off to-morrow.

BESSIE. I never saw any one so obstinate.

BLEANE. I shan't see you again for nearly a month. We have n't known one another very long, and if I had n't been going away I expect I'd have thought it better to wait a bit.

BESSIE [*clasping her hands*]. Lord Bleane, don't propose to me.

BLEANE. Why not?

BESSIE. Because I shall refuse you.

BLEANE. Oh!

BESSIE. Tell me about the part of the country you live in. I don't know Kent at all. Is it pretty?

BLEANE. I don't know. It's home.

BESSIE. I love those old Elizabethan houses that you have in England with all their chimneys.

BLEANE. Well, ours is n't a show place, you know. It's just a rather ugly yellow brick house that looks like a box, and it's got a great big stucco portico in front of it. I think the garden's rather jolly.

BESSIE. Pearl hates Feathers Nevil. She'd sell it if George would. She's only really happy in London.

BLEANE. I don't know that I was so particularly struck on Bleane till I was over in France. When I was in the hospital at Boulogne there did n't seem much to do but to think about things . . . it did n't seem as if I could get well. I knew I should if they'd only let me come home, but they would n't; they said I could n't be moved. It's rather bleak in our part of the country. We've got an east wind that people find a bit trying, but if you've been used to it all your life it bucks you up wonderful. In summer it can be awfully hot down there, but there's always something fresh and salt in the air. You see, we're so near the marshes . . . it was only just across the water and it seemed such an awful way off. I ain't boring you, am I?

BESSIE. No, I want you to tell me.

BLEANE. It's a funny sort of country; there are lots of green fields and elm trees and the roads wind about — it's rotten for motoring — and then you have the marshes with dykes in them; we used to jump them when we were boys and fall in mostly; and then there's the sea. It does n't sound much, but I felt it was the most ripping thing I knew. And then there are hop-fields, I forgot them, and the cast houses. They're rather picturesque, I suppose. I expect it's like the lavender to you. To me it's just England. [BESSIE *gets up and walks towards the window. In the distance is heard the melancholy cry of the lavender man.*] What are you thinking about?

BESSIE. It must be very wonderful to feel like that about one's home. I've never known anything but a red stone house in Nineteenth Street. As soon as popper can get a decent offer for it we're going to move farther up town. Mother has a fancy for Seventy-Second Street, I don't know why.

BLEANE. Of course I know it could n't mean the same to a girl that it means to me. I should n't expect anyone to live there always. I can be quite happy in London.

BESSIE [*with a smile*]. You're determined to do it?

BLEANE. If you could bring yourself to marry me I'd try and give you a good time.

BESSIE. Well, I suppose that's a proposal.

BLEANE. I've never made one before and it makes me a bit nervous.

BESSIE. You have n't said anything that I can answer yes or no to.

BLEANE. I don't want to say anything that you can answer no to.

BESSIE [*with a chuckle*]. Let me say that I'll think it over, may I?

BLEANE. I'm going away to-morrow.

BESSIE. I'll give you an answer when you come back.

BLEANE. But that won't be for four weeks.

BESSIE. It'll give us both a chance to make up our minds. After all, it is rather a serious step. You may come to the conclusion that you don't really want to marry me.

BLEANE. There's no fear of that.

BESSIE. You're coming down to Feathers for the week-end after you get back. If you change your mind send Pearl a wire putting yourself off. I shall understand and I shan't be in the least hurt or offended.

BLEANE. Then it's good-bye till then.

BESSIE. Yes. And . . . thank you very much for wishing to marry me.

BLEANE. And thank you very much for not refusing me outright.

[*They shake hands and he goes out. She walks over to the window to look at him, glances at the watch on her wrist and then leaves the room. In a moment* POLE *shows*

in ARTHUR FENWICK. *He is a tall, elderly man with a red face and grey hair.*]

POLE. I'll tell her ladyship you're here, sir.

FENWICK. That'll be very good of you.

[POLE *goes out.* FENWICK *takes a cigar from his case and the evening paper from a table and settles himself down comfortably to read and smoke. He makes himself very much at home.*]

[PEARL *comes in.*]

PEARL. Are n't Bessie and Harry Bleane here?

FENWICK. No.

PEARL. That's very strange. I wonder what can have happened.

FENWICK. Never mind about Bessie and Harry Bleane now. Give me your attention now.

PEARL. You're very late.

FENWICK. I like to come when I stand a chance of finding you alone, girlie.

PEARL. I wish you would n't call me girlie, Arthur. I do hate it.

FENWICK. That's how I think of you. When I'm present at one of your big set outs and watch you like a queen among all those lords and ambassadors and big wigs I just say to myself she's my girlie and I feel warm all over. I'm so proud of you then. You've got there, girlie, you've got there.

PEARL [*smiling*]. You've been very kind to me, Arthur.

FENWICK. You've got brains, girlie, that's how you've done it. It's brains. Underneath your flighty ways and that casual air of yours, so that one might think you were enjoying yourself and nothing more, I see you thinking it all out, pulling a string here and a string there; you've got them in the hollow of your hand all the time. You leave nothing to chance, Pearl, you're a great woman.

PEARL. Not great enough to make you obey your doctor's orders.

FENWICK [*taking the cigar out of his mouth*]. You're not going to ask me to throw away the first cigar I've had to-day?

PEARL. To please me, Arthur. They're so bad for you.

FENWICK. If you put it like that I must give in.

PEARL. I don't want you to be ill.

FENWICK. You've got a great heart, girlie. The world just thinks you're a smart, fashionable woman, clever, brilliant, beautiful, a leader of fashion, but I know different. I know you've got a heart of gold.

PEARL. You're a romantic old thing, Arthur.

FENWICK. My love for you is the most precious thing I have in the world. You're my guiding star, you're my ideal. You stand to me for all that's pure and noble and clean in womanhood. God bless you, girlie. I don't know what I should do if you failed me. I don't believe I could live if I ever found out you were n't what I think you.

PEARL [*with her tongue in her cheek*]. You shan't if I can help it.

FENWICK. You do care for me a little, girlie?

PEARL. Of course I do.

FENWICK. I'm an old man, girlie.

PEARL. What nonsense. I look upon you as a mere boy.

FENWICK [*flattered*]. Well, I expect a good many young men would be glad to have my physique. I can work fourteen hours on end and feel as fresh as a daisy at the end of it.

PEARL. Your vitality is wonderful.

FENWICK. I sometimes wonder what it is that first drew you to me, girlie.

PEARL. I don't know. I suppose it was the impression of strength you give.

FENWICK. Yes, I've often been told that. It's very difficult for people to be with me long without realizing that — well, that I'm not just the man in the street.

PEARL. I always feel I can rely on you.

FENWICK. You could n't have said anything to please me better. I want you to rely on me. I know you. I 'm the only man who's ever understood you. I know that deep down in that big beating human heart of yours, you're a timid helpless little thing, with the innocence of a child, and

you want a man like me to stand between you and the world. My God, how I love you, girlie.

PEARL. Take care, there's the butler.

FENWICK. Oh, damn it, there's always the butler.

[POLE *comes in with a telegram and a parcel of books.*]

PEARL [*taking telegram and glancing at parcel*]. What's that, Pole?

POLE. They're books, my lady. They've just come from Hatchard's.

PEARL. Oh, I know. Undo them, will you? [POLE *cuts open parcel and takes out a bundle of four or five books.* PEARL *opens the telegram.*] Oh, bother. There's no answer, Pole.

POLE. Very good, my lady. [*Exit.*]

FENWICK. Is anything the matter?

PEARL. That fool Sturrey was dining here to-night, and he's just wired to say he can't come. I do hate having my parties upset. I'd asked ten people to meet him.

FENWICK. That's too bad.

PEARL. Pompous owl. He's refused invitation after invitation. I asked him six weeks ago this time, and he had n't the face to say he was engaged.

FENWICK. Well, I'm afraid you must give him up. I dare say you can do without him.

PEARL. Don't be a fool, Arthur. I'll get hold of him somehow. He may be Prime Minister one of these days. [*She reflects a moment.*] I wonder what his telephone number is. [*She gets up and looks in a book, and then sits down to telephone.*] Gerrard 7035. If he comes once because I force him to, he'll come again because he likes it. This house is like the kingdom of heaven. I have to compel them to come in . . . is Lord Sturrey in? Lady Grayston. I'll hold the line. [*Making her voice sweet and charming.*] Is that you, Lord Sturrey? It's Pearl Grayston speaking. I just called up to say it does n't matter a bit about to-night. Of course I'm disappointed you can't come. But you must come another day, will you? That's very nice of you! How about this day week? Oh, I'm sorry. Would Thursday suit you? Oh. Well, how about Friday? You're engaged every evening next week? You are in demand. Well, I'll tell you what, get your book and tell me what day you are free.

FENWICK. You're the goods, girlie. You'll get there.

PEARL. Tuesday fortnight. Yes, that'll suit me beautifully, 8.30. I'm so glad you chose that day because I'm having Pablo Casals in to play. I shall look forward to seeing you. Good-bye. [*She puts down the receiver.*] This time I've got him. The ape thinks he understands music.

FENWICK. Have you got Pablo Casals for Tuesday fortnight?

PEARL. No.

FENWICK. Are you sure you can get him?

PEARL. No, but I'm sure you can.

FENWICK. You shall have him, girlie. [*She takes the books that* POLE *brought in and puts them about the room.*] What are you doing that for?

PEARL. They're Richard Twining's books. He 's coming to dinner to-night.

FENWICK. Why d' you trouble about authors, girlie?

PEARL. London is n't like New York, you know. People like to meet them over here.

FENWICK. I should have thought your position was quite strong enough to do without them.

PEARL. We live in a democratic age. They take the place in society of the fools whom kings kept about their courts in the middle ages. They have the advantage that they don't presume on their position to tell one home truths. They're cheap. A dinner and a little flattery is all they want. And they provide their own clothes.

FENWICK. You litter up your house with their rotten books.

PEARL. Oh, but I don't keep them. These are on approval. I shall send them all back to the bookseller to-morrow morning.

FENWICK. Pearl, you're a little wonder. When you want to go into business you come to me and I'll take you into partnership.

PEARL. How is business?

FENWICK. Fine. I'm opening two new

branches next week. They laughed at me when I first came over here. They said I'd go bankrupt. I've turned their silly old methods upside down. He laughs longest who laughs last.

PEARL [*reflectively*]. Ah, I can't help thinking that's what my dressmaker said when she sent in my bill.

[*He gives a slight start and looks at her shrewdly. He sees her blandly smiling.*]

FENWICK. Girlie, you promised me you would n't run up any more bills.

PEARL. That's like promising to love, honor, and obey one's husband; the kind of undertaking no one is really expected to carry out.

FENWICK. You naughty little thing.

PEARL. It's Suzanne — you know, the dressmaker in the Place Vendôme. The war has dislocated her business and she wants to get her money in. It is n't very convenient for me to pay just at present. It's rather a large sum.

[*She gives him a sheaf of typewritten documents.*]

FENWICK. This looks more like a five-act play than a bill.

PEARL. Few plays keep up the interest to the last line.

FENWICK [*turns the pages and looks at the total*]. And that is in the nature of a dramatic surprise.

PEARL. Clothes are expensive, are n't they? I wish I could dress in fig-leaves. It would be cheap and I believe it would suit me.

FENWICK [*putting the bill in his pocket*]. Well, I'll see what I can do about it.

PEARL. You are a duck, Arthur . . . would you like me to come and lunch with you to-morrow?

FENWICK. Why, sure.

PEARL. All right. Now you must go, as I want to lie down before I dress for dinner.

FENWICK. That's right. Take care of yourself, girlie, you're very precious to me.

PEARL. Good-bye, dear old thing.

FENWICK. Good-bye, girlie.

[*He goes out. As he goes to door telephone bell rings.* PEARL *takes up receiver.*]

PEARL. You're speaking to Lady Grayston. Tony! Of course I know your voice. Well, what is it? I'm not at all stern. I'm making my voice as pleasant as I can. I'm sorry you find it disagreeable. [*She gives a chuckle.*] No, I'm afraid I could n't come to tea to-morrow. I shall be engaged all the afternoon. What is the day after to-morrow? [*Smiling.*] Well, I must ask Bessie. I don't know if she's free. Of course I'm not coming alone. It would be most compromising. A nice-looking young man like you. What would Minnie say? Oh, I know all about that. . . . I did n't promise anything. I merely said the future was everybody's property. A sleepless night. Fancy. Well, good-bye. . . . Tony, do you know the most enchanting word in the English language? Perhaps.

[*She puts down the telephone quickly and the curtain falls.*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

The Scene is a morning-room at Feathers Nevil, the GRAYSTONS' *place in the country. It has an old-fashioned, comfortable look; nothing is very new; the chintzes are faded. Three long French windows lead on to a terrace. It is after dinner; a fine night and the windows are open. The women of the party are sitting down waiting for the men. They are* PEARL *and* BESSIE, *the* DUCHESSE DE SURENNES *and the* PRINCESS DELLA CERCOLA.

PRINCESS. You must be exhausted after all the tennis you played this afternoon, Minnie.

DUCHESSE. Not a bit. I only played four sets.

PRINCESS. You played so vigorously. It made me quite hot to look at you.

DUCHESSE. If I did n't take exercise I should be enormous. Oh, Flora, how I envy you. You can eat anything you choose and it has no effect on you. And what makes it so unfair is that you don't care about food. I am a lazy and a greedy woman. I never eat any of the things I like and I never miss a day without taking at least an hour's exercise.

PRINCESS [*smiling*]. If mortification is the first step in sanctity I'm sure you must be on the high road to it.

PEARL. One of these days you'll give up the struggle, Minnie, and like Flora take to good works.

DUCHESSE [*with immense decision*]. Never. I shall lie on my death bed with my hair waved and a little rouge on my cheeks, and with my last breath murmur: not gruel, it's so fattening.

PEARL. Well, you'll have more serious tennis to-morrow. Harry Bleane plays much better than Thornton.

DUCHESSE. It was very tiresome of him not to come till it was just time to dress.

PEARL. He only got back from Russia yesterday and he had to go down to see his mother. [*With an amused glance at her sister.*] Bessie asked me not to put him next her at dinner.

BESSIE. Pearl, are you a cat! I do think it's hateful the way you discuss my private affairs with all and sundry.

DUCHESSE. My dear Bessie, they've long ceased to be your private affairs.

PEARL. I'm afraid Bessie misses her opportunities. Just before he went to Russia I left them alone together and nothing happened. All my tact was wasted.

BESSIE. Your tact was too obvious, Pearl.

DUCHESSE. Well, do be quick and bring him to the scratch, my dear. I'm growing tired of people asking me, is he going to propose or not.

BESSIE. Don't they ever ask, is she going to accept him or is she not?

DUCHESSE. Of course you'll accept him.

BESSIE. I'm not so sure.

PRINCESS [*smiling*]. Perhaps it depends on the way he asks.

PEARL. For Heaven's sake, don't expect too much romance. Englishmen are n't romantic. It makes them feel absurd. George proposed to me when he was in New York for the Horse Show. I was n't very well that day and I was lying down. I was looking a perfect fright. He told me all about a mare he had and he told me all about her father and her mother and her uncles and her aunts, and then he said, look here, you'd better marry me.

PRINCESS. How very sudden.

PEARL. Oh, I said, why did n't you tell me you were going to propose. I'd have had my hair waved. Poor George, he asked why.

DUCHESSE. The French are the only nation who know how to make love. When Gaston proposed to me he went down on his knees and he took my hand and he said he could n't live without me. Of course I knew that, because he had n't a cent, but still it thrilled me. He said I was his guiding star and his guardian angel. Oh, I don't know what. It was beautiful. I knew he'd been haggling with papa for a fortnight about having his debts paid; but it *was* beautiful.

PEARL. Believe me, Bessie, the flourishing state of father's store is a much sounder basis for matrimonial happiness than any amount of passion.

BESSIE. Oh, Pearl, what is this you've been telling people about popper selling bananas?

PEARL. Bananas? Oh, I remember. They were saying that Mrs. Hanly used to wash the miners' clothes in California. That and her pearls are taking her everywhere. I was n't going to be outdone, so I said father used to sell bananas in the streets of New York.

BESSIE. He never did anything of the kind.

PEARL. I know he did n't, but I thought people were getting rather tired of the hardware store and I made a perfectly killing story out of it. I had a new Callot frock on and I thought I could manage the bananas.

DUCHESSE. A most unpleasant vegetable. So fattening.

[*The men come in.* THORNTON CLAY, ARTHUR FENWICK, *and* FLEMING. PEARL *and* BESSIE *get up.*]

BESSIE. You've been a long time.

DUCHESSE. Where is Tony?

CLAY. He and Bleane are finishing their cigars.

DUCHESSE. Well, Mr. Harvey, are you still enjoying life in London?

CLAY. He should be. I've got him in-

vitations to all the nicest parties. But he will waste his time in sight-seeing. The other day, Thursday night, was n't it? I wanted to take him to Hurlingham and he insisted on going to the National Gallery instead.

PEARL [*smiling*]. What an outrageous proceeding.

FLEMING. I don't see that it was any more outrageous for me than for you. I saw you coming in just as I was going out.

PEARL. I had a reason to go. Arthur Fenwick has just bought a Bronzino and I wanted to see those in the National Gallery.

DUCHESSE. I think it's much more likely that you had an assignation. I've always heard it's a wonderful place for that. You never meet any of your friends, and if you do they're there for the same purpose and pretend not to see you.

FLEMING. I certainly only went to see the pictures.

CLAY. But good Heavens! If you want to do that there's Christie's and there you will meet your friends.

FLEMING. I'm afraid you'll never make a man of fashion out of me, Thornton.

PEARL. I wish those men would come and then we could dance.

DUCHESSE. Oh, that'll be charming. It's such good exercise, is n't it? I'm told that you dance divinely, Mr. Harvey.

FLEMING. I don't know about that. I dance.

DUCHESSE [*to the* PRINCESS]. Oh, my dear, who d' you think I danced with the other night? [*Impressively.*] Ernest.

PRINCESS. Oh!

DUCHESSE. My dear, don't say oh! like that. Don't you know who Ernest is?

PEARL. Ernest is the most sought man in London.

PRINCESS. Do you mean the dancing master?

DUCHESSE. Oh, my dear, you must n't call him that. He'd be furious. He is n't a professional. He gives lessons at ten guineas an hour, but only to oblige. He's invited to all the best dances.

FLEMING. One of the things that rather surprised me at balls was to see all these dancing masters. Do English girls like to be pawed about by Greeks, Dagos, and Bowery toughs?

CLAY. You Americans who live in America, you're so prudish.

DUCHESSE. Believe me, I would go to *any* dance where there was the remotest chance of meeting Ernest. It's a perfect dream to dance with him. He showed me a new step and I can't get it quite right. I don't know what I shall do if I don't run across him soon again. [BLEANE *and* TONY PAXTON *come in from the terrace.*] At last.

TONY. We've been taking a stroll in the garden.

PEARL. I hope you showed him my tea house.

BESSIE. It's Pearl's new toy. You must be sure to admire it.

PEARL. I'm very proud of it. You know George won't let me do anything here. He says it's his house and he is n't going to have any of my muck. He won't even have new chintzes. Well, there was an old summer house [*pointing*] just over there, and it was all worm-eaten and horrid and tumble-down, and what they call picturesque, but it was rather a nice place to go and have tea in, as it had a really charming view; I wanted to pull it down and put up a smart Japanese tea house instead, but George would n't hear of it because, if you please, his mother — a peculiarly plain woman — used to sit and sew there. Well, I bided my time, and the other day when George was in London I pulled down the old summer house, got my Japanese tea house down from town, put it up, and had everything finished by the time George came back twenty-four hours later. He very nearly had an apoplectic stroke. If he had I should have killed two birds with one stone.

BESSIE. Pearl!

PRINCESS. I don't know why you furnished it so elaborately.

PEARL. Well, I thought in the hot weather I'd sleep there sometimes. It'll be just like sleeping in the open air.

FENWICK. These young people like to dance, Pearl.

PEARL. Where would you like to dance,

in here with the gramophone or in the drawing-room with the pianola?

BESSIE. Oh, in the drawing-room.

PEARL. Let's go there then.

BESSIE [*to* CLAY]. Come and help me get the rolls out.

CLAY. Right you are.

[*They go out, followed by the* DUCHESSE, PEARL, *and* TONY, FENWICK *and* BESSIE.]

FLEMING [*to the* PRINCESS]. Are n't you coming?

PRINCESS. No, I think I'll stay here for the present. But don't bother about me. You must go and dance.

FLEMING. There are enough men without me. I'm sure Thornton Clay is a host in himself.

PRINCESS. You don't like Thornton?

FLEMING. What do they think of a man like Thornton Clay in England? Don't they despise him?

PRINCESS. Everywhere, in New York as much as in London, there are masses of people struggling to get into society. It's such a common sight that one loses the sense of there being anything disgraceful in it. Pearl would tell you that English society is a little pompous; they welcome a man who can make them laugh. Thornton is very useful. He has high spirits, he's amusing, he makes a party go.

FLEMING. I should have thought a man could find some better use for his life than that.

PRINCESS. I'm so glad that you're not going to be dazzled by this English life that dazzles so many of our countrymen. Amuse yourself, learn what you can from it, take all the good it offers you, and go back to America.

FLEMING. I shall be glad to go back. Perhaps I ought never to have come.

PRINCESS. I'm afraid you're not very happy.

FLEMING. I don't know what makes you think that.

PRINCESS. It's not very hard to see that you're in love with Bessie.

FLEMING. Did you know that I was engaged to her?

PRINCESS [*surprised*]. No.

FLEMING. I was engaged to her before I went to Harvard. I was eighteen then and she was sixteen.

PRINCESS. How very early in life you young people settle things in America.

FLEMING. Perhaps it was rather silly and childish. But when she wrote and told me that she thought we'd better break it off I discovered I cared more than I thought.

PRINCESS. What did you say to her?

FLEMING. I could n't try to hold her to a promise she gave when she was a school girl. I answered that I sympathized and understood.

PRINCESS. When did this happen?

FLEMING. A couple of months ago. Then I got the chance to go over to Europe and I thought I'd come to see what was going on. It did n't take me long to tumble.

PRINCESS. You're bearing it very well.

FLEMING. Oh, the only thing I could do was to be pleasant. I should only have bored her if I'd made love to her. She took our engagement as an amusing joke and there was n't anything for me to do but accept her view of it. She was having the time of her life. At first I thought perhaps she'd grow tired of all these balls and parties, and then if I was on the spot I might persuade her to come back to America with me.

PRINCESS. You may still.

FLEMING. No, I have n't a chance. The first day I arrived she told me how wonderful she thought this English life. She thinks it full and varied. She thinks it has beauty.

PRINCESS. That sounds rather satirical.

FLEMING. Pearl has been very nice to me. She's taken me about, I've driven with her constantly, I've sat in her box at the opera, I'm her guest at the moment. If I had any decency I'd hold my tongue.

PRINCESS. Well?

FLEMING [*bursting out impetuously*]. There's something in these surroundings that makes me feel terribly uncomfortable. Under the brilliant surface I suspect all kinds of ugly and shameful secrets that everyone knows and pretends not to. This is a strange house in which the husband is never seen and Arthur Fenwick, a vulgar

sensualist, acts as host, and it's an attractive spectacle, this painted duchesse, devouring with her eyes a boy young enough to be her son. And the conversation — I don't want to seem a prude; I daresay people over here talk more freely than the people I've known; but surely there are women who don't have lovers, there are such things as honour and decency and self-restraint here. If Bessie is going to remain over here I wish to God she'd marry her lord at once and get out of it quickly.

PRINCESS. D' you think she'll be happy?

FLEMING. Are they any of them happy? How can they expect to be happy when they marry for — [*The* PRINCESS *gives a sudden start and* FLEMING *stops short.*] I beg your pardon. I was forgetting. Please forgive me. You see, you're so different.

PRINCESS. I'm sorry I interrupted you. What were you going to say?

FLEMING. It was n't of any importance. You see, I've been thinking it over so much that it rather got on my nerves. And I have n't been able to tell anyone what I was thinking about. I'm dreadfully sorry.

PRINCESS. You were going to say, how can they expect to be happy when they marry for a trumpery title. You thought, they're snobs, vulgar snobs, and the misery of their lives is the proper punishment for their ignoble desires.

FLEMING [*very apologetically*]. Princess.

PRINCESS [*ironically*]. Princess.

FLEMING. Believe me, I had n't the smallest intention of saying anything to wound you.

PRINCESS. You have n't. It's too true. Most of us marry foreigners and they are merely snobs. But I wonder if it's all our fault. We're not shown a better way of life. No one has ever hinted to us that we have any duty towards our own country. We're blamed because we marry foreigners, but columns are written about us in the papers, our photographs are published, our friends are excited and envious. After all we are human. At first when people addressed me as Princess I could n't help feeling thrilled. Of course it was snobbishness.

FLEMING. You make me feel a terrible cad.

PRINCESS. But sometimes there've been other motives too. Has it ever occurred to you that snobbishness is the spirit of romance in a reach-me-down? I was only twenty when I married Marino. I did n't see him as a fortune-hunting Dago, but as the successor of a long line of statesmen and warriors. There'd been a pope in his family, and a dozen cardinals, one of his ancestors had been painted by Titian, for centuries they'd been men of war, with power of life and death. When Marino came and asked me to marry him it was romance that stood in his shoes and beckoned to me. I thought of the palace in Rome which I had visited as a tripper and where I might reign as mistress. I thought it was splendid to take my place after all the great ladies, Orsinis, Colonnas, Gaetanis, Alcobrandinis. I loved him.

FLEMING. But there's no need to tell me that you could never do anything from an unworthy motive.

PRINCESS. My husband's family had been ruined by speculation. He was obliged to sell himself. He sold himself for five million dollars. And I loved him. You can imagine the rest. First he was indifferent to me, then I bored him, and at last he hated me. Oh, the humiliation I endured. When my child died I could n't bear it any longer. I left him. I went back to America. I found myself a stranger. I was out of place, the life had become foreign to me. I could n't live at home. I settled in England, and here were strangers too. I've paid very heavily for being a romantic girl.

[BESSIE *comes in.*]

BESSIE. Really, Fleming, it's too bad of you to sit in here and flirt with the princess. We want you to come and dance.

[*The* PRINCESS, *agitated, gets up and goes out into the garden.*]

[*Looking after her.*] Is anything the matter?

FLEMING. No.

BESSIE. Are you coming to dance or are you not?

FLEMING. I had quite a talk with Lord Bleane after dinner, Bessie.

BESSIE [*smiling*]. Well?

FLEMING. Are you going to accept the

coronet that he's dangling before your eyes?

BESSIE. It would be more to the point if you asked whether I am going to accept the coronet that he's laying at my feet.

FLEMING. He's a very nice fellow, Bessie.

BESSIE. I know that.

FLEMING. I wanted to dislike him and I could n't.

BESSIE. Why?

FLEMING. Well, I don't think much of these English lords who run after American girls for their money. I expected him to be a brainless loafer, with just enough cunning to know his market value, but he's a modest, unassuming fellow. And he's cheery. I wanted him to talk about the war, but he would n't. To tell the truth, I'm puzzled.

BESSIE [*chaffing him*]. Fancy that.

FLEMING. I think it's a low-down thing he's doing, and yet he does n't seem a low-down fellow.

BESSIE. He might be in love with me, you know.

FLEMING. Is he?

BESSIE. No.

FLEMING. Are you going to marry him?

BESSIE. I don't know.

FLEMING. I suppose he's come here to ask you.

BESSIE [*after a short pause*]. He asked me a month ago. I promised to give him an answer when he came back from Russia . . . I'm in a panic. He's waiting to get me alone. I was able to be quite flippant about it when I had a month before me, but now, when I've got to say yes or no, I'm so jumpy I don't know what to do with myself.

FLEMING. Don't marry him, Bessie.

BESSIE. Why not?

FLEMING. Well, first you're no more in love with him than he is with you.

BESSIE. And then?

FLEMING. Is n't that enough?

BESSIE. I wonder if you realize what he offers me. Do you know what the position of an English peeress is?

FLEMING. Does it mean so much to be called your ladyship by tradesmen.

BESSIE. You donkey, Fleming. If I marry an American boy my life will be over; if I marry Harry Bleane it will be only just beginning. Look at Pearl. I could do what she's done; I could do more, because George Grayston is n't ambitious. I could make Harry do anything I liked. He would go into politics and I should have a salon. Why, I could do anything.

FLEMING [*drily*]. I don't know why you should be in a panic. You've evidently made up your mind. You'll have a brilliant marriage, with crowds outside the church, your photograph will be in all the papers, you'll go away for your honeymoon and you'll come back. What will you do then?

BESSIE. Why, settle down.

FLEMING. Will you break your heart like the princess because your husband has taken a mistress, or will you take lovers like the Duchesse de Surennes, or will you bore yourself to death like Pearl because your husband is virtuous and wants you to do your duty?

BESSIE. Fleming, you've got no right to say things like that to me.

FLEMING. I'm sorry if I've made you angry. I had to say it.

BESSIE. Are you quite sure that it's for my sake you don't want me to marry Lord Bleane?

[LORD BLEANE *enters from terrace.*]

BLEANE. I was looking for you everywhere. I wondered where you'd got to.

[*There is a moment's pause.* FLEMING HARVEY *looks from* BESSIE *to* BLEANE.]

FLEMING. I really must go and dance with the duchesse or she'll never forgive me.

BLEANE. I've just been dancing with her. My dear fellow, it's the most violent form of exercise I've ever taken.

FLEMING. I'm in very good condition.

[*He goes out.*]

BLEANE. Blessings on him.

BESSIE. Why?

BLEANE. Because he's left us alone. Ask me another.

BESSIE. I don't think I will.

BLEANE. Then I'll ask you one.

BESSIE. Please don't. Tell me all about Russia.

BLEANE. Russia is an empire. Its capital is Petrograd. It has three rivers of navigable size.

BESSIE. You're in very high spirits tonight.

BLEANE. You may well wonder. Everything has conspired to depress them.

BESSIE. Oh, what nonsense.

BLEANE. First, I was in England thirty-six hours before I had a chance of seeing you, secondly when I arrived you'd already gone up to dress, then when I was expecting to sit next to you at dinner I was put between Lady Grayston and the princess, and lastly you made me pound away at that beastly pianola when I wanted to dance with you.

BESSIE. Well, you've survived it all.

BLEANE. What I want to point out to you is that if notwithstanding I'm in high spirits I must have a most engaging nature.

BESSIE. I never dreamt of denying it.

BLEANE. So much to the good.

BESSIE. The man's going to propose to me.

BLEANE. No, I'm not.

BESSIE. I beg your pardon. My mistake.

BLEANE. I did that a month ago.

BESSIE. There's been a change of moon since then and no proposal holds good after the new moon.

BLEANE. I never knew that.

BESSIE. You've been down to see your mother.

BLEANE. She sends you her love.

BESSIE. Have you told her?

BLEANE. I told her a month ago.

[BESSIE *does not speak for a moment; when she answers it is more gravely.*]

BESSIE. You know, I want to be frank with you. You won't think it disagreeable of me, will you? I'm not in love with you.

BLEANE. I know. But you don't positively dislike me?

BESSIE. No, I like you very much.

BLEANE. Won't you risk it, then?

BESSIE [*almost tragically*]. I can't make up my mind.

BLEANE. I'll do all I can to make you happy. I'll try not to make a nuisance of myself.

BESSIE. I suppose I'm a perfect fool. I ought to play the game prettily. You see, I know that you can't afford to marry a girl who is n't well-to-do. Everyone knows what I have. Pearl has taken good care that they should. You would n't ever have thought of me otherwise. We're arranging a deal. You give your title and your position and I give my money. It's a commonplace thing enough, but somehow it sticks in my throat.

[BLEANE *hesitates a moment and walks up and down thinking.*]

BLEANE. You make me feel an awful swine. The worst of it is that some part of what you say is true. I'm not such a fool that I did n't see your sister was throwing us together. I don't want to seem a conceited ass, but a fellow in my sort of position can't help knowing that many people think him rather a catch. Mothers of our marriageable daughters are very transparent sometimes, you know; and if they don't marry their daughters they're determined it shan't be for want of trying.

BESSIE. Oh, I can quite believe that. I have noticed it in American mothers too.

BLEANE. I knew it would be a good thing if I married you. I don't suppose I should have thought about you if I had n't been told you were pretty well off. It's beastly now, saying all that.

BESSIE. I don't see why.

BLEANE. Because after a bit I found out I'd fallen in love with you. And then I did n't care if you had n't got a bob. I wanted to marry you because — because — I did n't know what to do without you.

BESSIE. Harry!

BLEANE. Do believe me, I swear it's true. I don't care a hang about the money. After all we could get along without it. And I love you.

BESSIE. It's very good to hear you say that. I'm so absurdly pleased and flattered.

BLEANE. You do believe it, don't you?

BESSIE. Yes.

BLEANE. And will you marry me?

BESSIE. If you like.

BLEANE. Of course I like.

[*He takes her in his arms and kisses her.*]

BESSIE. Take care, someone might come in.

BLEANE [*smiling and happy*]. Come into the garden with me.

[*He stretches out his hand; she hesitates a moment, smiles, takes it, and together they go out on to the terrace. For the moment the music of a one step is heard more loudly, and then the* DUCHESSE *and* TONY PAXTON *come in. She sinks into a chair, fanning herself and he goes over to a table, takes a cigarette and lights it.*]

DUCHESSE. Did you see? That was Harry Bleane and Bessie. I wondered where they were.

TONY. You've got eyes like a lynx.

DUCHESSE. I'm positive they were hand in hand.

TONY. It looks as if she'd worked it at last.

DUCHESSE. I don't know about that. It looks as if he'd worked it.

TONY. She's not such a catch as all that. If I were a peer I'd sell myself for a damned sight more than eight thousand a year.

DUCHESSE. Don't stand so far away, Tony. Come and sit on the sofa by me.

TONY [*going over to her*]. I say, I've been talking to Bleane about two-seaters.

DUCHESSE [*very coldly*]. Oh.

TONY [*giving her a look out of the corner of his eye*]. He says I can't do better than get a Talbot.

DUCHESSE. I don't see why you want a car of your own. You can always use one of mine.

TONY. That's not the same thing. After all, it won't cost much. I can get a ripper for just over five hundred pounds, with a really smart body and self-starter and everything.

DUCHESSE. You talk as though five hundred pounds were nothing at all.

TONY. Hang it all, it is n't anything to you.

DUCHESSE. What with the war and one thing and another I'm not so terribly flush just now. No one knows the claims I have on me. Because one has a certain amount of money one's supposed to be made of it. They don't realize that if one spends it in one way one can't spend it in another. It costs me seven thousand pounds to have my house redecorated.

TONY [*sulkily*]. You said I could buy myself a car.

DUCHESSE. I said I'd think about it. I was n't under the impression that you'd go and order one right away.

TONY. I've practically committed myself now.

DUCHESSE. You only want a car so that you can be independent of me.

TONY. Well, hang it all, you can't expect me to be tied down to your apron strings always. It's a bit thick if whenever I want to take a man down to play golf I have to ring up and ask if I can have one of your cars. It makes me look such an ass.

DUCHESSE. Don't you know there's nothing in the world I would n't do for you?

TONY [*quickly*]. Well, why don't you marry me?

DUCHESSE [*with a gasp*]. I can't do that. You know I can't do that.

TONY. Why not? You could still call yourself Duchesse de Surennes.

DUCHESSE. No, I've always told you nothing would induce me to marry.

TONY. That shows how much you love me.

DUCHESSE. Marriage is so middle class. It takes away all the romance of love.

TONY. You simply want to have your freedom and keep me bound hand and foot. Do you think it's jolly to know what people say about me? After all I've got some pride.

DUCHESSE. I'm sure we shall be able to get you a job soon and then no one will be able to say anything.

TONY. I'm getting fed up with the whole business; I tell you that straight. I'd just as soon chuck it.

DUCHESSE. Tony, you don't mean to say you want to leave me! I tell you I'll kill myself if you do. I could n't bear it, I could n't bear it! I'll kill myself.

TONY. For God's sake, don't make such a row.

DUCHESSE. Say you don't mean it, Tony, I shall scream.

TONY. I don't want to make you unhappy, but really sometimes you are unreasonable.

DUCHESSE. You mean about the car?

TONY. I was n't thinking about the car then.

DUCHESSE. You can have it if you like.

TONY. I don't want it now.

DUCHESSE. Tony, don't be unkind.

TONY. I'm not going to take any more presents from you.

DUCHESSE. I did n't mean to be unreasonable. I'd like you to have the car, Tony. I'll give you a check for it tomorrow. [*Coaxingly.*] Tell me what the body's like.

TONY [*sulkily*]. Oh, it's a torpedo body.

DUCHESSE. You'll take me for a drive in it sometimes.

[*He turns round and looks at her. She puts out her hand; he thaws and smiles engagingly*].

TONY. I say, you are awfully kind to me.

DUCHESSE. You do like me a little, don't you?

TONY. Of course I do.

DUCHESSE. You have a good heart, Tony. Kiss me.

TONY. [*He kisses her. Pleased and excited.*] I saw an awfully jolly body in a shop in Trafalgar Square the day before yesterday. I've got a half mind to get the people who made your body to copy it.

DUCHESSE. Why don't you get it at the shop you saw it at. My people are terribly expensive and they are n't any better than anybody else.

TONY. Well, you see, I don't know anything about the firm. I just happened to catch sight of it as I was passing.

DUCHESSE. What on earth were you doing in Trafalgar Square on Thursday? I thought you were going to Ranelagh.

TONY. I was put off. I had n't got anything to do, so I thought I'd just slope to the National Gallery for half an hour.

DUCHESSE. That's the place I should have expected you to go to.

[*A sudden suspicion comes to the* DUCHESSE *that he was there with* PEARL, *but she makes no sign that he can see.*]

[*Blandly.*] Did you look at the Bronzinos?

TONY [*falling into the trap*]. Yes. Arthur Fenwick bought one the other day at Christie's. He paid a devil of a price for it too.

DUCHESSE [*clenching her hand in effort to hide her agitation*]. Oh!

TONY. I do think it's rot, the prices people pay for old masters. I'm blowed if I'd give ten thousand pounds for a picture.

DUCHESSE. We'll go to the National Gallery together one of these days, shall we?

TONY. I don't know that I want to make a habit of it, you know.

[PEARL *and* THORNTON CLAY *come in. During the conversation the* DUCHESSE *surreptitiously watches* PEARL *and* TONY *for signs of an intelligence between them.*]

PEARL. I've got great news for you. Bessie and Harry Bleane are engaged.

DUCHESSE. Oh, my dear, I'm so glad. How gratified you must be.

PEARL. Yes, I'm delighted. You must come and congratulate them.

CLAY. Above all we must congratulate one another. We've all worked for it, Pearl.

TONY. He had n't much chance, poor blighter, had he?

PEARL. We're going to have one more dance and then Arthur wants to play poker. You must come.

CLAY [*to the* DUCHESSE]. Will you dance this with me, Minnie?

DUCHESSE. I'd like to.

[CLAY *gives her his arm. She throws* TONY *and* PEARL *a glance and purses her lips. She goes out with* CLAY.]

PEARL. You have n't danced with me yet, Tony. You should really pay some attention to your hostess.

TONY. I say, don't go.

PEARL. Why not?

TONY. Because I want to talk to you.

PEARL [*flippantly*]. If you want to whisper soft nothings in my ear you'll find the one step exceedingly convenient.

TONY. You're a little beast, Pearl.

PEARL. You've been having a long talk with Minnie.

TONY. Oh, she's been making me a hell of a scene.

PEARL. Poor thing, she can't help it. She adores you.

TONY. I wish she did n't and you did.

PEARL [*with a chuckle*]. My dear, it's your only attraction for me that she adores you. Come and dance with me.

TONY. You've got a piece of hair out of place.

PEARL. Have I? [*She takes a small glass out of her bag and looks at herself. As she does so* TONY *steps up behind her and kisses her neck.*] You fool! Don't do that! Anyone might see us.

TONY. I don't care.

PEARL. I do. Arthur's as jealous as cat's meat.

TONY. Arthur's playing the pianola.

PEARL. There's nothing wrong with my hair.

TONY. Of course there is n't. You're perfectly divine to-night. I don't know what there is about you.

PEARL. You're a foolish creature, Tony.

TONY. Let's go into the garden.

PEARL. No, they'll be wondering where we are.

TONY. Hang it all, it's not so extraordinary to take a stroll instead of dancing.

PEARL. I don't want to take a stroll.

TONY. Pearl.

PEARL. Yes? [*She looks at him. For a moment they stare at one another in silence. A hot flame of passion leaps up suddenly between them, and envelops them, so that they forget everything but that they are man and woman. The air seems all at once heavy to breathe.* PEARL, *like a bird in a net, struggles to escape. Their voices sink and unconsciously they speak in whispers.*] Don't be a fool, Tony.

TONY [*hoarsely*]. Let's go down to the tea house.

PEARL. No, I won't.

TONY. We shall be quite safe there.

PEARL. I dare n't. It's too risky.

TONY. Oh, damn the risk.

PEARL [*agitated*]. I can't.

TONY. I'll go down there and wait.

PEARL [*breathlessly*]. But — if they wonder where I am?

TONY. They'll think you've gone up to your room.

PEARL. I won't come, Tony.

TONY. I'll wait for you.

[*As he goes out,* ARTHUR FENWICK *comes in.* PEARL *gives a slight start, but quickly recovers herself.*]

FENWICK. Look here, I'm not going on pounding away at that wretched pianola unless you come and dance, Pearl.

PEARL [*exhausted*]. I'm tired; I don't want to dance any more.

FENWICK. Poor child, you look quite pale.

PEARL. Do I? I thought I'd put plenty of rouge on. Am I looking revolting?

FENWICK. You always look adorable. You're wonderful. I can't think what you see in an old fellow like me.

PEARL. You're the youngest man I've ever known.

FENWICK. How well you know the thing to say to please me.

[*He is just going to take her in his arms, but instinctively she draws back.*]

PEARL. Let's play poker now, shall we?

FENWICK. Not if you're tired, darling.

PEARL. I'm never too tired for that.

FENWICK. You don't know how I adore you. It's a privilege to be allowed to love you.

PEARL [*sure of herself again*]. Oh, what nonsense. You'll make me vain if you say things like that.

FENWICK. You do love me a little, don't you? I want your love so badly.

PEARL. Why I dote on you, you silly old thing.

[*She takes his face in her hands and kisses him, avoids his arms that seek to encircle her and goes towards door.*]

FENWICK. Where are you going?

PEARL. I'm just going to my room to arrange my face.

FENWICK. My God, how I love you, girlie. There's nothing in the world I would n't do for you.

PEARL. Really?

FENWICK. Nothing.

PEARL. Then ring for Pole and tell him to set out the card table and the counters.

FENWICK. And I was prepared to give you a sable coat or a diamond tiara.

PEARL. I much prefer chinchilla and emeralds.

FENWICK [*taking her hand*]. Must you really go and arrange your face?

PEARL. Really.

FENWICK. Be quick, then. I can hardly bear you out of my sight.

[*He kisses her hand.*]

PEARL. [*She looks at him tenderly.*] Dear Arthur. [*She goes out.*]

[FENWICK *rings the bell. Then he goes on the terrace and calls out.*]

FENWICK. Thornton, we're going to play poker. Get them to come along, will you?

CLAY [*outside*]. Right-o!

[POLE *comes in.*]

FENWICK. Oh, Pole, get the card table ready.

POLE. Very good, sir.

FENWICK. And we shall want the counters. Let's have those mother-o'-pearl ones that I brought down the last time I was here.

POLE. Very good, sir.

[*The* PRINCESS *comes in.* POLE *proceeds to bring a card table into the centre of room and unfolds it. He gets a box of counters out of a drawer and puts them on the table.*]

FENWICK. Pearl has just gone to her room. She'll be here in one minute.

PRINCESS [*looking at the preparations*]. This looks like more dissipation.

FENWICK. We're going to have a little game of poker. I don't think we ought to play very long; Pearl is looking terribly tired. She's a very wonderful woman. It's very seldom you meet a woman like Pearl. She's got a remarkable brain. I've frequently discussed business with her and I've been amazed at her clear grasp of complicated matters. I owe a great deal to her. And she's good, Princess, she's good. She's got a heart of gold

PRINCESS. I'm sure she has.

FENWICK. She'll always do a good turn to anybody. She's the most generous, the most open-handed woman I've ever met.

[*The* DUCHESSE *comes in as he says these words.*]

DUCHESSE. Who is this?

FENWICK. We were talking of our hostess.

DUCHESSE. I see.

[*She has her bag in her hand; when the others are not looking she hides it behind a sofa.*]

FENWICK [*innocently*]. She would adorn any sphere. She's got everything, tact, brains, energy, beauty.

DUCHESSE. Virtue.

FENWICK. If I were the British people I'd make her Prime Minister.

PRINCESS [*smiling*]. You're an excellent friend, Mr. Fenwick.

FENWICK. Of course you've heard of her hostel for young women alone in London?

DUCHESSE [*sweetly*]. Yes, there was a great deal about it in the papers, was n't there?

FENWICK. That's the thing I've always admired in Pearl. She has a thoroughly modern understanding of the value of advertisement.

DUCHESSE. Yes, she has, has n't she?

FENWICK. Well believe me, she conceived the idea of that hostel, built it, endowed it, organized it, all on her own. It cost twenty thousand pounds.

DUCHESSE. But surely, Mr. Fenwick, you paid the twenty thousand pounds? Pearl has n't got sums like that to throw away on charity.

FENWICK. I gave the money, but the money is n't the important thing. The idea, the organization, the success, are all due to Pearl.

DUCHESSE. It has certainly been one of the best advertised of recent philanthropic schemes.

[THORNTON CLAY, BESSIE, BLEANE, *and* FLEMING *come in.*]

CLAY. We're all dying to play poker.

FENWICK. The table is ready.

BESSIE. Where is Pearl?

FENWICK. She's gone to her room. She'll be back in a minute.

[*They gather round the table and sit down.*]

BESSIE. You're going to play, Princess?

PRINCESS. Oh, I don't think so. I'll look on. I'm going to bed in a minute.

BESSIE. Oh, you must play.

[PRINCESS *smiles, shrugs her shoulders, approaches the table.*]

FENWICK. Leave a place for Pearl.

DUCHESSE. You must leave one for Tony too.

CLAY. What's he doing?

DUCHESSE. He'll be here presently.

FENWICK. Shall I give out the counters? What would you like to play for?

PRINCESS. Don't let it be too high.

DUCHESSE. How tiresome of you, Flora. I think I'm in luck to-night.

FENWICK. We don't want to ruin anyone. Forty counters for a sovereign.

PRINCESS. Very well.

FENWICK [*to* CLAY]. Count them out in forties, Thornton. Mr. Harvey, you might count them out, will you?

FLEMING. Sure.

[*The three of them start counting out the counters.*]

DUCHESSE. Oh, how stupid of me, I have n't got my bag.

FENWICK. Never mind, we'll trust you.

DUCHESSE. Oh, I'd rather pay at once. It saves so much bother. Besides, I hate not having my bag.

PRINCESS. One always wants to powder one's nose when one has n't got it.

DUCHESSE. Bessie, dear, I left it in Pearl's new tea house. Do run and fetch it for me.

BESSIE. Certainly.

BLEANE. No, I'll go.

BESSIE. You don't know the way. I can go through the bushes. It's only twenty yards. You stop and count out the counters. [*She goes out.*]

FENWICK. There's one lot of forty. Will you take them, Princess?

PRINCESS. Thank you. Here's a pound.

DUCHESSE. I'll give you my pound as soon as Bessie brings my bag.

CLAY. How on earth came you to leave it in the tea house?

DUCHESSE. I'm so careless. I'm always leaving my bag about.

CLAY. Your deal, Fenwick.

FENWICK. Ante up, Princess.

PRINCESS. I beg your pardon.

[*She pushes forward a counter.* FENWICK *deals. The others take up their cards.*]

FENWICK. A shilling to come in.

FLEMING. I'm coming in.

BLEANE. I always come in.

FENWICK. I ought n't to, but I shall all the same. Are you going to make good your ante, Princess?

PRINCESS. I may just as well, may n't I?

CLAY. Who bets?

PRINCESS. I'm out of it.

CLAY. I said it was a pair of twos.

FLEMING. I'll bet a shilling.

CLAY. I'll take it and raise your shilling.

FENWICK. I suppose I must risk my money. What have I got to put down. Two shillings?

FLEMING. There's your shilling and I'll raise you two shillings more.

CLAY. No, I've had enough.

FENWICK. I'll take you and raise you five shillings.

FLEMING. Very well, I'll raise you five shillings.

FENWICK. I'll see you.

[BESSIE *comes in.* DUCHESSE *has been watching for her.* BESSIE *is excessively disturbed.*]

DUCHESSE. Ah, there's Bessie.

FENWICK [*to* FLEMING]. What have you got?

DUCHESSE. Did you find my bag?

BESSIE [*with a gasp*]. No, it was n't there.

DUCHESSE. Oh, but I remember distinctly leaving it there. I'll go and look for it myself. Mr. Fenwick, will you come with me.

BESSIE. No, don't — you can't get into the tea house.

DUCHESSE. How d' you know the bag is n't there, then?

PRINCESS [*surprised*]. Bessie, is anything the matter?

BESSIE [*in a strained voice*]. The door of the tea house is locked.

DUCHESSE. Oh, it can't be. I saw Pearl and Tony go in there just now.

[BESSIE *suddenly hides her face and bursts into a flood of tears.*]

PRINCESS [*starting to her feet*]. Minnie, you devil. What have you been doing?

DUCHESSE. Don't ask what I've been doing.

PRINCESS. How dare you send the girl! How cruel! How cruel!

FENWICK. You must be mistaken. Pearl went up to her room.

DUCHESSE. Go and look for her . . .

[FENWICK *is about to start from his chair.* PRINCESS *puts her hand on his shoulder.*]

PRINCESS. Where are you going?

DUCHESSE. I saw her.

[*For a moment there is a pause.*]

CLAY [*in an embarrassed way*]. Well, we'd better go on with our game, had n't we?

[*The* PRINCESS *and* BLEANE *are bending over* BESSIE *trying to get her to control herself.*]

FLEMING. That was your money, Mr. Fenwick.

FENWICK [*staring in front of him with red face and blood-shot eyes. Under his breath*]. The slut! The slut!

[DUCHESSE *takes out her bag from behind the cushion, gets out stick for her lips and her mirror and begins to paint them.*]

CLAY. You'd better deal, Fleming. The Princess won't play, I expect.

DUCHESSE. Deal me cards. I want to play.

CLAY. Bleane, come on. We'd better go on with our game. [BLEANE *comes forward.* FLEMING *deals cards. A stormy silence hangs over the party, broken only by the short speeches referring to the game; they play to try and relieve the tension. They are all anxiously awaiting* PEARL, *afraid she will come, knowing she must, and dreading the moment; they are nervous and constrained.*] Your ante, Bleane. [BLEANE *puts forward a counter. Cards are dealt in silence.*] I'm coming in.

[FENWICK *looks at his cards, puts forward a couple of counters, but does not speak.* FLEMING *puts forward counters.*]

FLEMING. D' you want a card?

BLEANE. Three, please.

CLAY. Two.

FENWICK [*with an effort over himself*]. I'll have three.

[FLEMING *deals them as they ask. Just as he has given* FLEMING *his,* PEARL *comes in, followed by* TONY. TONY *is smoking a cigarette.*]

PEARL. Oh, have you started already?

FENWICK [*violently*]. Where have you been?

PEARL. I? My head was aching a little and I went for a turn in the garden. I found Tony composing a sonnet to the moon.

FENWICK. You said you were going to your room.

PEARL. What *are* you talking about?

[*She looks around, sees the* DUCHESSE'S *look of angry triumph, and gives a slight start.*]

DUCHESSE. Once too often, my dear, once too often.

[PEARL *takes no notice. She sees* BESSIE. BESSIE *has been staring at her with miserable eyes and now she hides her face.* PEARL *realizes that everything is discovered. She turns coolly to* TONY.]

PEARL. You damned fool, I told you it was too risky.

CURTAIN

ACT III

The Scene is the same as in the last Act, the morning-room at Feathers. It is the next day, Sunday, about three in the afternoon, and the sun is shining brightly.

[DISCOVERED: *The* PRINCESS, THORNTON CLAY, *and* FLEMING *are sitting down;* FLEMING *lights another cigarette.*]

PRINCESS. Is it good for you to smoke so many cigarettes?

FLEMING. I should n't think so.

CLAY. He must do something.

PRINCESS. Perhaps you can get up a game of tennis later on.

FLEMING. It's very hot for tennis.

CLAY. Besides, who will play?

PRINCESS. You two could have a single.

CLAY. If we only had the Sunday papers it would be something.

PRINCESS. You can hardly expect them in a place like this. I don't suppose there are many trains on Sunday.

CLAY. I wonder if dinner is going to be as cheerful as luncheon was.

FLEMING. Did Pearl send any explanation for not appearing at luncheon?

PRINCESS. I have n't an idea.

CLAY. I asked the butler where she was. He said she was lunching in bed. I wish I'd thought of that.

PRINCESS. I'm afraid we *were* rather silent.

CLAY. Silent! I shall never forget that luncheon. Minnie subdued — and silent. Tony sulky — and silent. Bessie frightened — and silent. Blanche embarrassed — and silent. Fenwick furious — and silent. I tried to be pleasant and chatty. It was like engaging the pyramids in small talk. Both of you behaved very badly. You might have given me a little encouragement.

FLEMING. I was afraid of saying the wrong thing. The Duchesse and Bessie looked as if they'd burst into tears on the smallest provocation.

PRINCESS. I was thinking of Pearl. What a humiliation! What a horrible humiliation!

FLEMING. What d' you think she'll do now?

CLAY. That's what I'm asking myself. I have an idea that she won't appear again till we're all gone.

PRINCESS. I hope she won't. She's always so sure of herself, I could n't bear to see her pale and mortified.

CLAY. She's got plenty of courage.

PRINCESS. I know. She may force herself to face us. It would be a dreadful ordeal for all of us.

FLEMING. D' you think she's feeling it very much?

PRINCESS. She would n't be human if she were n't. I don't suppose she slept any better last night than the rest of us. Poor thing, she must be a wreck.

FLEMING. It was a terrible scene.

PRINCESS. I shall never forget it. The things that Minnie said. I could n't have believed such language could issue from a woman's throat. Oh, it was horrible.

CLAY. It was startling. I've never seen a woman so beside herself. And there was no stopping her.

FLEMING. And with Bessie there.

PRINCESS. She was crying so much, I doubt if she heard.

CLAY. I was thankful when Minnie had the hysterics and we were able to fuss over her and dab her face and slap her hands. It was a very welcome diversion.

FLEMING. Does she have attacks like that often?

CLAY. I know she did when the young man before Tony married an heiress. I think she has one whenever there's a crisis in the affairs of her heart.

FLEMING. For goodness sake, Thornton, don't talk about it as if it were a joke.

CLAY [*surprised*]. What's the matter, Fleming?

FLEMING. I think it's abominable to treat the whole thing so flippantly.

CLAY. Why, I was very sympathetic. I was n't flippant. Who got the *sal volatile?* I got the *sal volatile.*

FLEMING [*with a shrug of the shoulders*]. I daresay your nerves are a bit on edge. You see, before, I only thought things were rather queer. It's come as, well, as a shock, to discover exactly what the relations are between all these people. And what I can't very easily get over is to realize that I'm the only member of the party who does n't take it as a matter of course.

CLAY. We shall never make a man of the world of you, Fleming.

FLEMING. I'm afraid that did n't sound very polite, Princess. I beg your pardon.

PRINCESS. I should have few friends if I demanded the standard that you do. I've learned not to judge my neighbors.

FLEMING. Is it necessary to condone their vices?

PRINCESS. You don't understand. It's not entirely their fault. It's the life they lead. They've got too much money and too few responsibilities. English women in our station have duties that are part of their birthright, but we, strangers in a strange land, have nothing to do but to enjoy ourselves.

FLEMING. Well, I thank God, Bleane is a decent man, and he'll take Bessie out of all this.

[*The* DUCHESSE *comes in. Unlike the* PRINCESS, *who is in a summer frock, suitable for the country, the* DUCHESSE *wears a town dress and a hat.*]

PRINCESS. You've been changing your frock, Minnie.

DUCHESSE. Yes, I'm leaving this house in half an hour. I'd have gone this morning if I'd been able to get away. I always thought it is a detestable hole, but now that I've discovered there are only two trains on Sunday, one at nine and the other at half-past four, I have no words to express my opinion of it.

CLAY. Yet you have an extensive vocabulary, Minnie.

DUCHESSE. I've been just as much a prisoner as if I'd been shut up with lock and key. I've been forced to eat that woman's food. I thought every mouthful would choke me.

PRINCESS. Do keep calm, Minnie. You know how bad it is for you to upset yourself.

DUCHESSE. As soon as I found there was n't a train I sent over to the garage and said I wanted to be taken to London at once. Would you believe it, I could n't get a car.

CLAY. Why not?

DUCHESSE. One of the cars went up to town early this morning and the other is being overhauled. There's nothing but a luggage cart. I could n't go to London in a luggage cart. As it is I shall have to go to the station in it. I shall look ridiculous.

CLAY. Have you ordered it?

DUCHESSE. Yes. It's to be round at the door in a few minutes.

CLAY. What on earth can Pearl have sent the car up to London for?

DUCHESSE. To show her spite.

PRINCESS. That's not like her.

DUCHESSE. My dear, she's been my greatest friend for fifteen years. I know her through and through, and I tell you that she has n't got a single redeeming quality. And why does she want to have the car overhauled to-day? When you're giving a party the least you can do is to see that your cars are in running order.

PRINCESS. Oh, well, that was an accident. You can't blame her for that.

DUCHESSE. I only have one thing to be thankful for, and that is that she has had the decency to keep to her room. I will be just. It shows at least that she has some sense of shame.

PRINCESS. Will you let me have a word or two with Minnie?

CLAY. Why, of course. Come along, Fleming.

[CLAY *and* FLEMING HARVEY *go into the garden.*]

DUCHESSE. My dear, if you're going to ask me to turn the other cheek, don't. Because I'm not going to. I'm going to do all I can to revenge myself on that woman. I'm going to expose her. I'm going to tell everyone how she's treated me. When I was her guest!

PRINCESS. You must take care what you say for your own sake, Minnie.

DUCHESSE. I know quite enough about her to make her position in London impossible. I'm going to ruin her.

PRINCESS. What about Tony?

DUCHESSE. Oh, I've finished with him. Ah! I'm not the kind of woman to stand that sort of treatment. I hope he'll end in the gutter.

PRINCESS. Don't you care for him any more?

DUCHESSE. My dear, if he was starving and went down on his bended knees to me for a piece of bread I would n't give it to him. He revolts me.

PRINCESS. Well, I'm very glad. It distressed me to see you on those terms with a boy like that. You're well rid of him.

DUCHESSE. My dear, you need n't tell me that. He's a thorough wrong 'un and that's all there is about it. He has n't even

had the decency to try and excuse himself. He has n't even made an attempt to see me.

PRINCESS. [*Gives her a quick look.*] After all, he never really cared for you. Anyone could see that.

DUCHESSE [*her voice breaking*]. Oh, don't say that, Flora! I could n't bear it. He loved me. Until that woman came between us I know he loved me. He could n't help loving me. I did everything in the world for him. [*She bursts into tears.*]

PRINCESS. Minnie! My dear, don't give way. You know what a worthless creature he is. Have n't you any self-respect?

DUCHESSE. He's the only man I've ever loved. I could hardly bear him out of my sight. What shall I do without him?

PRINCESS. Take care, here he is.

[TONY *comes in. He is startled at seeing the* DUCHESSE. *She turns away and hurriedly dries her tears.*]

TONY. Oh, I beg your pardon. I did n't know anyone was here. I was looking for some cigarettes.

[*He stands there awkwardly, not knowing whether to go or stay. The* PRINCESS *looks at him reflectively. There is a moment's silence. Then she shrugs her shoulders and goes out. He looks at the* DUCHESSE *who stands with her back to him. He hesitates a moment, then, almost on the tips of his toes, walks over to the cigarettes, fills his case, takes another look at the* DUCHESSE, *and is in the act of tip-toeing out of the room when she stops him with her question.*]

DUCHESSE. Where are you going?

TONY. Nowhere in particular.

DUCHESSE. Then you'd better stay here.

TONY. I thought you wished to be alone.

DUCHESSE. Is that why you've kept away from me all day? [*He sinks sulkily into an armchair. The* DUCHESSE *finally turns round and faces him.*] Have n't you got anything to say for yourself at all?

TONY. What's the good of talking?

DUCHESSE. You might at least say you're sorry for the pain you've caused me. If you'd had any affection for me you would n't have done all you could to avoid me.

TONY. I knew you'd only make a scene.

DUCHESSE. Good Heavens, you surely don't expect me not to make a scene.

TONY. The whole thing's very unfortunate.

DUCHESSE. Ha! Unfortunate. You break my heart and then you say it's unfortunate.

TONY. I did n't mean that. I meant it was unfortunate that you caught us out.

DUCHESSE. Oh, hold your stupid tongue. Every word you say is more unfortunate than the last.

TONY. It's because I knew you'd take offence at everything I said that I thought the best thing I could do was to keep out of the way.

DUCHESSE. You're heartless, heartless. If you'd had any decent feeling you could n't have eaten the lunch you did. But you munched away, munched, munched, munched, till I could have killed you.

TONY. Well, I was hungry.

DUCHESSE. You ought n't to have been hungry.

TONY. What are you going to do about it?

DUCHESSE. About your appetite? Pray to God your next mouthful chokes you.

TONY. No, about the other.

DUCHESSE. I'm going to leave this house this afternoon.

TONY. D' you want me to come too?

DUCHESSE. What d' you suppose it matters to me whether you go or stay?

TONY. If you go I shall have to go too.

DUCHESSE. You ought to start soon then. It's four miles to the station. I shall be obliged if you will not get in the same carriage as me.

TONY. I'm not going to walk. They can run me down in a car.

DUCHESSE. There's nothing but a luggage cart, and I'm going in that.

TONY. Is n't there room for me?

DUCHESSE. No.

TONY. When d' you want me to move out of my flat?

DUCHESSE. What has that got to do with me?

TONY. You know very well that I can't pay the rent.

DUCHESSE. That's your lookout.

TONY. I shall go to the colonies.

DUCHESSE. That's the very best thing you can do. I hope you'll have to break stones, and dig, and paint — with lead paint. I hope you're miserable.

TONY. Oh, well, it'll have its compensations.

DUCHESSE. Such as — ?

TONY. I shall be my own master. I was about fed up with this, I can tell you.

DUCHESSE. Yes, you can say that now.

TONY. D' you think it was all jam, never being able to call my soul my own? I was sick to death of it.

DUCHESSE. You cad!

TONY. Well, you may just as well know the truth.

DUCHESSE. D' you mean to say you never cared for me? Not even at the beginning? [*He shrugs his shoulders, but does not answer. She speaks the next phrases in little gasps, gradually weakening as her emotion overcomes her. He stands before her in sulky silence.*] Tony. I've done everything in the world for you. I've been like a mother to you. How *can* you be so ungrateful. You have n't got any heart. If you had you'd have asked me to forgive you. You'd have made some attempt to . . . Don't you *want* me to forgive you?

TONY. What d' you mean by that?

DUCHESSE. If you'd only asked me, if you'd only shown you were sorry, I'd have been angry with you, I would n't have spoken to you for a week, but I'd have forgiven you, I'd have forgiven you, Tony. But you never gave me a chance. It's cruel of you, cruel.

TONY. I was a damned fool, I know that.

DUCHESSE. Are you in love with that woman?

TONY. No.

DUCHESSE. Then why did you? Oh, Tony, how could you!

TONY. If one felt about things at night as one does next morning life would be a dashed sight easier.

DUCHESSE. If I said to you let's let bygones be bygones and start fresh, what would you say, Tony?

[*She looks away. He rests his eyes on her reflectively.*]

TONY. We've made a break now. We'd better leave it at that. I shall go out to the colonies.

DUCHESSE. Tony, you don't mean that seriously. You could never stand it. You know, you're not strong. You'll only die.

TONY. Oh, well, one can only die once.

DUCHESSE. I'm sorry for all I said just now, Tony. I did n't mean it.

TONY. It does n't matter.

DUCHESSE. I can't live without you, Tony.

TONY. I've made up my mind. It's no good talking.

DUCHESSE. I'm sorry I was horrid to you, Tony. I'll never be again. Won't you forget it? Oh, Tony, won't you forgive me? I'll do anything in the world for you if only you won't leave me.

TONY. It's a rotten position I'm in. I must think of the future.

DUCHESSE. Oh, but, Tony, I'll make it right for you.

TONY. It's very kind of you, but it's not good enough. Let's part good friends, Minnie. If I've got to walk to the station it's about time I was starting.

[*He holds out his hand to her.*]

DUCHESSE. D' you mean to say it's good-bye? Good-bye forever? Oh, how can you be so cruel!

TONY. When one's made up one's mind to do a thing it's best to do it at once.

DUCHESSE. Oh, I can't bear it! I can't bear it! [*She begins to cry.*] Oh, what a fool I was! I ought to have pretended not to see anything. I wish I'd never known. Then you would n't have thought of leaving me.

TONY. Come, my dear, pull yourself together. You'll get over it.

DUCHESSE [*desperately*]. Tony, if you want to marry me — I'm willing to marry you. [*A pause.*]

TONY. I should be just as dependent on you. D' you think it would be jolly for me having to come to you for every five pounds I wanted?

DUCHESSE. I'll settle something on you so that you'll be independent. A thousand a year. Will that do?

TONY. You are a good sort, Minnie.

[*He goes over and sits down beside her.*]

DUCHESSE. You will be kind to me, won't you?

TONY. Rather. And look here, you need n't give me that two-seater. I shall be able to drive the Rolls-Royce.

DUCHESSE. We won't stay another minute in this house. Ring the bell, will you? You'll come with me in the luggage cart?

TONY [*touching the bell*]. I much prefer that to walking.

DUCHESSE. It's monstrous that there should n't be a motor to take luggage to the station. It's a most uncomfortable house to stay in.

TONY. Oh, beastly. D' you know that I did n't have a bathroom attached to my bedroom?

[POLE *comes in.*]

DUCHESSE. Is the luggage cart ready, Pole?

POLE. I'll enquire, your grace.

DUCHESSE. My maid is to follow in the morning with the luggage. Mr. Paxton will come with me. [*To* TONY.] What about your things?

TONY. Oh, they'll be all right. I brought my valet with me.

POLE. Her ladyship is just coming downstairs, your grace.

DUCHESSE. Oh, is she? Thank you; that'll do, Pole.

POLE. Very good, your grace.

[*He goes out. As soon as he closes the door behind him the* DUCHESSE *springs to her feet.*]

DUCHESSE. I won't see her! Tony, see if Thornton is on the terrace.

TONY. All right. [*He goes to the French window.*] Yes, I'll call him, shall I? Clay, come here a minute, will you? [*He goes out.*]

[THORNTON CLAY *comes in, followed immediately by the* PRINCESS *and* FLEMING.]

DUCHESSE. Thornton, I'm told Pearl is coming downstairs.

CLAY. At last.

DUCHESSE. I won't see her. Nothing will induce me to see her.

PRINCESS. My dear, what is to be done? We can't make her remain upstairs in her own house.

DUCHESSE. No, but Thornton can speak to her. She's evidently ashamed of herself. I only ask one thing, that she should keep out of the way till I'm gone.

CLAY. I'll do my best.

DUCHESSE. I'm going to walk up and down till the luggage cart is ready. I have n't taken my exercise to-day.

[*She goes out.*]

CLAY. If Pearl is in a temper that's not a very pleasant message to give her.

PRINCESS. You won't find her in a temper. If she's dreadfully upset tell her what Minnie says gently.

FLEMING. Here is Bessie. [*She comes in.*] It appears that Pearl is just coming downstairs.

BESSIE. Is she?

PRINCESS. Have you seen her this morning, Bessie?

BESSIE. No. She sent her maid to ask me to go to her, but I had a headache and could n't.

[*They look at her curiously. She is inclined to be abrupt and silent. It may be imagined that she has made up her mind to some course, but what that is the others cannot tell.* FLEMING *goes over and sits beside her.*]

FLEMING. I'm thinking of going back to America next Saturday, Bessie.

BESSIE. Dear Fleming, I shall be sorry to lose you.

FLEMING. I expect you'll be too busy to think about me. You'll have to see all kinds of people and then there's your trousseau to get.

BESSIE. I wish you could come over to Paris with me, Princess, and help me with it.

PRINCESS. I? [*She gets an inkling of what* BESSIE *means.*] . . . Of course if I could be of any help to you, dear child. . . . [*She takes* BESSIE'S *hand and gives her a fond smile.* BESSIE *turns away to hide a tear that for a moment obscures her eyes.*] Per-

haps it's a very good idea. We must talk about it.

[PEARL *comes in. She is perfectly cool and collected, radiant in a wonderful, audacious gown; she is looking her best and knows it. There is nothing in her manner to indicate the smallest recollection of the episode that took place on the preceding evening.*]

PEARL [*brightly*]. Good-morning.

CLAY. Good-afternoon.

PEARL. I knew everyone would abuse me for coming down so late. It was such a lovely day I thought it was a pity to get up.

CLAY. Don't be pardonical, Pearl, it's too hot.

PEARL. The sun streamed into my room and I said it's a sin not to get up on a morning like this. And the more I said I ought to get up the more delightful I found it to lie in bed. How is your head, Bessie?

BESSIE. Oh, it's better, thank you.

PEARL. I was sorry to hear you were n't feeling up to the mark.

BESSIE. I did n't sleep very well.

PEARL. What have you done with your young man?

BESSIE. Harry? He's writing letters.

PEARL. Spreading the glad tidings, I suppose. You ought to write to his mother, Bessie. It would be a graceful attention. A charming, frank little letter, the sort of thing one would expect an *ingénue* to write. Straight from the heart.

CLAY. I'm sure you'd love to write it yourself, Pearl.

PEARL. And we must think about sending an announcement to the *Morning Post*.

FLEMING. You think of everything, Pearl.

PEARL. I take my duties as Bessie's chaperon very seriously. I've already got a brilliant idea for the gown I'm going to wear at the wedding.

FLEMING. Gee!

PEARL. My dear Fleming, don't say gee, it's so American; say, by Jove.

FLEMING. I could n't without laughing.

PEARL. Laffing. Why can't you say laughing?

FLEMING. I don't want to.

PEARL. How obstinate you are. Of course now that Bessie is going to marry an Englishman she'll have to take lessons. I know an excellent woman. She's taught all the American peeresses.

FLEMING. You surprise me.

PEARL. She's got a wonderful method. She makes you read aloud. And she has long lists of words that you have to repeat twenty times a day, half instead of haf, and barth instead of bath, and carn't instead of can't.

FLEMING. By Jove instead of gee.

PEARL. Peeresses don't say by Jove, Fleming. She teaches them to say good Heavens instead of mercy.

BESSIE. [*Gets up. To* FLEMING.] D' you think it's too hot for a turn in the garden?

FLEMING. Why, no.

BESSIE. Shall we go, then?

[*They go out together.*]

PEARL. What's the matter with Bessie? She must have swallowed a poker last night. No wonder she could n't sleep. It's enough to give anyone indigestion.

CLAY. You know that Minnie is going away this afternoon, Pearl?

PEARL. Yes, so I heard. It's such a bore there are no cars to take her to the station. She'll have to go in the luggage cart.

CLAY. She does n't wish to see you.

PEARL. Oh, but I wish to see her.

CLAY. I daresay.

PEARL. I must see her.

CLAY. She asked me to tell you that she only wished you to do one thing and that is to keep out of the way till she's gone.

PEARL. Then you can go and tell her that unless she sees me she shan't have the luggage cart.

CLAY. Pearl!

PEARL. That's my ultimatum.

CLAY. Can you see me taking a message like that to the Duchesse?

PEARL. It's four miles to the station and there's not a scrap of shade all the way.

CLAY. After all, it's not a very unreasonable request she's making.

PEARL. If she wants the luggage cart she must come and say good-bye to me like a lady.

CLAY [*to the* PRINCESS]. What am I to do? We used up all the *sal volatile* last night.

PRINCESS. I'll tell her if you like. D' you really insist on seeing her, Pearl?

PEARL. Yes, it's very important. [*The* PRINCESS *goes out.* PEARL *watches her go with a smile*]. I'm afraid Flora is shocked. Tell me how luncheon went off.

CLAY. My dear, it was like a gathering of relations who hate one another after the funeral of a rich aunt who's left all her money to charity.

PEARL. It must have been priceless. I'd have given anything to be there.

CLAY. Why were n't you?

PEARL. Oh, I knew there'd be scenes and I'm never at my best in a scene before luncheon. One of the things I've learned from the war is that a general should choose his own time for a battle.

CLAY. Minnie moved heaven and earth to get away this morning.

PEARL. I knew she could n't. I knew none of them could go till the afternoon.

CLAY. The train service is atrocious.

PEARL. George says that is one of the advantages of the place. It keeps it rural. There's one at nine and another at half-past four. I knew that not even the most violent disturbances would get people up at eight who never by any chance have breakfast till ten. As soon as I awoke I took the necessary steps.

CLAY [*interrupting*]. You slept?

PEARL. Oh, yes. I slept beautifully. There's nothing like a little excitement to give me a good night.

CLAY. Well, you certainly had some excitement. I've rarely witnessed such a terrific scene.

PEARL. I sent out to the garage and gave instructions that the old Rolls-Royce was to be taken down at once, and the other was to go to London.

CLAY. What for?

PEARL. Never mind. You'll know presently. Then I did a little telephoning.

CLAY. Why were you so anxious to prevent anybody from leaving the house?

PEARL. I could n't have persuaded myself that my party was a success if half my guests had left me on Sunday morning. I thought they might change their minds by the afternoon.

CLAY. If that's your only reason I don't think it's a very good one.

PEARL. It is n't. I will be frank with you, Thornton. I can imagine that a very amusing story might be made out of this episode. I never mind scandal, but I don't expose myself to ridicule if I can help it.

CLAY. My dear Pearl, surely you can trust the discretion of your guests. Who do you think will give it away?

PEARL. You.

CLAY. I? My dear Pearl, I give you my word of honour . . .

PEARL [*calmly*]. My dear Thornton, I don't care twopence about your word of honour. You're a professional entertainer and you'll sacrifice everything to a good story. Why, don't you remember that killing story about your father's death? You dined out a whole season on it.

CLAY. Well, it was a perfectly killing story. No one would have enjoyed it more than my poor old father.

PEARL. I'm not going to risk anything, Thornton. I think it's much better there should be no story to tell.

CLAY. No one can move the clock backwards, Pearl. I could n't help thinking at luncheon that there were the elements of a very good story indeed.

PEARL. And you'll tell it, Thornton. Then I shall say: my dear, does it sound probable? They all stayed quite happily till Monday morning; Sturrey and the Arlingtons dined on the Sunday night, and we had a very merry evening; besides, I was lunching with Minnie only two days afterwards. And I shall say, poor Thornton, he *is* such a liar, is n't he?

CLAY. I confess that if you are reconciled with Minnie it will take a great deal of the point away from my story. What about Arthur Fenwick?

PEARL. He's a sensualist, and the sensual are always sentimental.

CLAY. He scared me dreadfully at luncheon. He was eating a dressed crab, and his face grew every minute more purple. I was expecting him to have an apoplectic fit.

PEARL. It's not an unpleasant death, you know, Thornton, to have a stroke while you're eating your favourite dish.

CLAY. You know, there are no excuses for you, Pearl.

PEARL. Human nature excuses so much, Thornton.

CLAY. You really might have left Tony alone. This habit you have of snitching has got you into trouble before.

PEARL. People are so selfish. It just happens that I find no man so desirable as one that a friend of mine is in love with. I make allowances for the idiosyncracies of my friends. Why should n't they make allowances for mine? [*The* DUCHESSE *comes in, erect and haughty, with the air of Boadicea facing the Roman legions.* PEARL *turns to her with an ingratiating smile.*] Ah, Minnie.

DUCHESSE. I'm told the only way I can leave this house is by submitting to the odious necessity of seeing you.

PEARL. I wish you would n't go, Minnie. Lord Sturrey is coming over to dinner tonight and so are the Arlingtons. I always take a lot of trouble to get the right people together and I hate it when anybody fails me at the last minute.

DUCHESSE. D' you think anything would have induced me to stay so long if there'd been any possibility of getting away?

PEARL. It would n't have been nice to go without saying good-bye to me.

DUCHESSE. Don't talk nonsense, Pearl.

PEARL. D' you know that you behaved very badly last night, and I ought to be extremely angry with you.

DUCHESSE. I? Thornton, the woman's as mad as a hatter.

PEARL. You really ought n't to have made a scene before Harry Bleane. And, you know, to tell Arthur was n't playing the game. If you wanted to tell anyone, why did n't you tell George?

DUCHESSE. In the first place he was n't there. He never is.

PEARL. I know. He says that now society has taken to coming down to the country for week-ends he prefers London.

DUCHESSE. I'll never forgive you. Never! Never! You'd got Arthur Fenwick. Why were n't you satisfied with him? If you wanted to have an affair with anyone, why did n't you take Thornton? He's almost the only one of your friends with whom you have n't. The omission is becoming almost marked.

PEARL. Thornton never makes love to me except when other people are looking. He can be very passionate in the front seat of my box at the opera.

CLAY. This conversation is growing excessively personal. I'll leave you.

[*He goes out.*]

PEARL. I'm sorry I had to insist on your seeing me, but I had something quite important to say to you.

DUCHESSE. Before you go any further, Pearl, I wish to tell you that I'm going to marry Tony.

PEARL [*aghast*]. Oh, my dear, you're not doing it to spite me? You know, honestly, he does n't interest me in the slightest. Oh, Minnie, do think carefully.

DUCHESSE. It's the only way I can keep him.

PEARL. D' you think you'll be happy?

DUCHESSE. What should you care if I'm happy?

PEARL. Of course I care. D' you think it's wise? You're giving yourself into his hands. Oh, my dear, how can you risk it?

DUCHESSE. He said he was going out to the colonies. I love him. . . . I believe you're really distressed. How strange you are, Pearl! Perhaps it's the best thing for me. He may settle down. I was very lonely sometimes, you know. Sometimes, when I had the blues, I almost wished I'd never left home.

PEARL. And I've been moving heaven and earth to get him a job. I've been on the telephone this morning to all the cabinet ministers I know, and at last I've done it. That's what I wanted to tell you. I thought you'd be so pleased. I suppose he won't want it.

DUCHESSE. Oh, I'm sure he will. He's very proud, you know. That's one of the things I liked in him. He had to be dependent on me, and that's one of the reasons why he always wanted to marry me.

PEARL. Of course you'll keep your title.

DUCHESSE. Oh, yes, I shall do that.

PEARL [*going towards her as if to kiss her*]. Well, darling, you have my very, very best wishes.

DUCHESSE [*drawing back*]. I'm not going to forgive you, Pearl.

PEARL. But you've forgiven Tony.

DUCHESSE. I don't blame him. He was led away.

PEARL. Come, Minnie, don't be spiteful. You might let bygones be bygones.

DUCHESSE. Nothing will induce me to stay in this house another night.

PEARL. It's a very slow train, and you'll have to go without your tea.

DUCHESSE. I don't care.

PEARL. You won't arrive in London till half-past eight and you'll have to dine in a restaurant.

DUCHESSE. I don't care.

PEARL. You'll be grubby and hot. Tony will be hungry and out of temper. And you'll look your age.

DUCHESSE. You promised me the luggage cart.

PEARL [*with a sigh*]. You shall have it; but you'll have to sit on the floor because it has n't got any seats.

DUCHESSE. Pearl, it's not going to break down on the way to the station!

PEARL. Oh, no, how can you suspect me of playing a trick like that on you? . . . [*With a tinge of regret.*] It never occurred to me.

[THORNTON CLAY *comes in.*]

CLAY. Pearl, I thought you'd like to know that Fenwick is coming to say goodbye to you.

DUCHESSE. I'll go and tell Tony about the job you've got him. By the way, what is it?

PEARL. Oh, it's something in the Educational Office.

DUCHESSE. How very nice. What do they do there?

PEARL. Nothing. But it'll keep him busy from ten to four. [*The* DUCHESSE *goes out.*] She's going to marry him.

CLAY. I know.

PEARL. I'm a wonderful matchmaker. First Bessie and Harry Bleane, and now Minnie and Tony Paxton. I shall have to find someone for you, Thornton.

CLAY. How on earth did you manage to appease her?

PEARL. I reasoned with her. After all, she should be glad the boy has sown his wild oats before he marries, and besides, if he were her husband, of course she would n't expect fidelity from him; it seems unnatural to expect it when he is n't.

CLAY. But she's going all the same.

PEARL. I've got a quarter of an hour yet. Give me your handkerchief a minute, will you?

CLAY [*handing it to her*]. You're not going to burst into tears?

PEARL. [*She rubs her cheeks violently.*] I thought I ought to look a little wan and pale when Arthur comes in.

CLAY. You'll never love me, Pearl. You tell me all your secrets.

PEARL. Shall I tell you what to do about it? Take the advice I give to Americans who come over to London and want to see the Tower; say you've been and don't go.

CLAY. D' you think you can bring Arthur around?

PEARL. I'm sure I could if he loved me.

CLAY. My dear, he dotes on you.

PEARL. Don't be a fool, Thornton. He loves his love for me. That's quite a different thing. I've only got one chance. He sees himself as the man of iron. I'm going to play the dear little thing racket.

CLAY. You're a most unscrupulous woman, Pearl.

PEARL. No more than most. Please go. I think he ought to find me alone.

[CLAY *goes out.* PEARL *seats herself in a pensive attitude and looks down reflectively at the carpet; in her hand she holds dejectedly an open volume of poetry. Presently* ARTHUR FENWICK *comes in. She pretends not to see him. He is a strong man, battered but not beaten, struggling with the emotion which he tries to master.*]

FENWICK. Pearl.

PEARL [*with a jump*]. Oh, you startled me. I did n't hear you come in.

FENWICK. I daresay you're surprised to see me. I thought it was necessary that we should have a short conversation before I left this house.

PEARL [*looking away*]. I'm glad to see you once more.

FENWICK. You understand that everything is over between us.

PEARL. If you've made up your mind, there's nothing for me to say. I know that nothing can move you when you've once done that.

FENWICK [*drawing himself up a little*]. No. That has always been part of my power.

PEARL. I would n't have you otherwise.

FENWICK. I don't want to part from you in anger, Pearl. Last night I could have thrashed you within an inch of your life.

PEARL. Why did n't you? D' you think I'd have minded that from the man I loved?

FENWICK. You know I could never hit a woman.

PEARL. I thought of you all through the long hours of the night, Arthur.

FENWICK. I never slept a wink.

PEARL. One would never think it. You must be made of iron.

FENWICK. I think I am sometimes.

PEARL. Am I very pale?

FENWICK. A little.

PEARL. I feel a perfect wreck.

FENWICK. You must go and lie down. It's no good making yourself ill.

PEARL. Oh, don't bother about me, Arthur.

FENWICK. I've bothered about you so long. It's difficult for me to get out of the habit all at once.

PEARL. Every word you say stabs me to the heart.

FENWICK. I'll get done quickly with what I had to tell you and then go. Of course I shall continue the allowance I've always made you.

PEARL. Oh, I could n't take it! I could n't take it!

FENWICK. You must be reasonable, Pearl. This is a matter of business.

PEARL. It's a question I refuse to discuss. Nothing would have induced me to accept your help if I had n't loved you. Now that there can be nothing more between us — no, no, the thought outrages me.

FENWICK. I was afraid that you'd take up that attitude. Remember that you've only got eight thousand a year of your own. You can't live on that.

PEARL. I can starve.

FENWICK. I must insist, Pearl, for my own sake. You've adopted a style of living which you would never have done if you had n't had me at the back of you. I'm morally responsible, and I must meet my obligations.

PEARL. We can only be friends in future, Arthur.

FENWICK. I have n't often asked you to do anything for me, Pearl.

PEARL. I shall return your presents. Let me give you my pearl necklace at once.

FENWICK. Girlie, you would n't do that!

PEARL. [*She pretends to try and take the necklace off.*] I can't undo the clasp. Please help me.

[*She goes up to him and turns her back so that he may get at it.*]

FENWICK. I won't! I won't!

PEARL. I'll tear it off my neck!

FENWICK. Pearl, you break my heart. Do you care for me so little that you can't bear to wear the trifling presents I gave you?

PEARL. If you talk to me like that I shall cry. Don't you see that I'm trying to keep my self-control?

FENWICK. This is dreadful. This is even more painful than I anticipated.

PEARL. You see, strength is easy to you. I'm weak. That's why I put myself in your hands. I felt your power instinctively.

FENWICK. I know, I know, and it was because I felt you needed me that I loved you. I wanted to shelter you from the storms and buffets of the world.

PEARL. Why did n't you save me from myself, Arthur?

FENWICK. When I look at your poor pale little face I wonder what you'll do without me, girlie.

PEARL [*her voice breaking*]. It'll be very hard. I've grown so used to depending on you. Whenever anything has gone wrong I've come to you and you've put it right. I was beginning to think there was nothing you could n't do.

FENWICK. I've always welcomed obstacles. I like something to surmount. It excites me.

PEARL. You seemed to take all my strength from me. I felt strangely weak beside you.

FENWICK. It was n't necessary that we should both be strong. I loved you because you were weak. I liked you to come to me in all your troubles. It made me feel so good to be able to put everything right for you.

PEARL. You've always been able to do the impossible.

FENWICK [*impressively*]. I have never found anything impossible.

PEARL [*deeply moved*]. Except to forgive.

FENWICK. Ah, I see you know me. I never forget, I never forgive.

PEARL. I suppose that's why people feel there's something strangely Napoleonic about you.

FENWICK. Maybe, and yet — though you're only a woman you've broken me, Pearl, you've broken me.

PEARL. Oh, no, don't say that. I could n't bear that. I want you to go on being strong and ruthless.

FENWICK. Something has gone out of my life forever. I almost think you've broken my heart! I was so proud of you. I took so much pleasure in your success. Why, whenever I saw your name in the society columns of the papers it used to give me a thrill of satisfaction. What's going to become of you now, girlie, what's going to become of you now?

PEARL. I don't know. I don't care.

FENWICK. This fellow, does he care for you? Will he make you happy?

PEARL. Tony? He's going to marry the Duchesse. [FENWICK *represses a start.*] I shall never see him again.

FENWICK. Then if I leave you you'll have nobody but your husband.

PEARL. Nobody.

FENWICK. You'll be terribly lonely, girlie.

PEARL. You will think of me sometimes, Arthur, won't you?

FENWICK. I shall never forget you, girlie. I shall never forget how you used to leave your fine house in Mayfair and come and lunch with me downtown.

PEARL. You used to give me such delicious things to eat.

FENWICK. It was a treat to see you in your beautiful clothes sharing a steak with me and a bottle of beer. I can order a steak, Pearl, can't I?

PEARL. And d' you remember those delicious little onions that we used to have? [*She seems to taste them.*] M . . . m . . . m . . . it makes my mouth water to think of them.

FENWICK. There are very few women who enjoy food as much as you do, Pearl.

PEARL. D' you know, next time you dined with me, I'd made up my mind to give you an entirely English dinner. Scotch broth, herrings, mixed grill, saddle of lamb, and then *enormous* marrow bones.

[FENWICK *can hardly bear the thought, his face grows red, his eyes bulge and he gasps.*]

FENWICK. Oh, girlie [*with utter abandonment*]. Let's have that dinner. [*He seizes her in his arms and kisses her.*] I can't leave you. You need me too much.

PEARL. Arthur, Arthur, can you forgive me?

FENWICK. To err is human, to forgive divine.

PEARL. Oh, how like you that is.

FENWICK. If you must deceive me don't let me ever find out. I love you too much.

PEARL. I won't, Arthur. I promise you I won't.

FENWICK. Come and sit on the sofa and let me look at you. I seem to see you for the first time.

PEARL. You know you would n't have liked the walk to the station. It's four miles in the sun. You're a vain old thing and your boots are always a little too small for you. [BESSIE *comes in. She stops as she sees* PEARL *and* FENWICK *sitting hand in hand.*] Are you going out, Bessie?

BESSIE. As soon as Harry has finished his letters we're going for a walk.

PEARL [*to* FENWICK]. You must n't squeeze my hand in Bessie's presence, Arthur.

FENWICK. You're a very lucky girl, Bessie, to have a sister like Pearl. She's the most wonderful woman in the world.

PEARL. You're talking nonsense, Arthur. Go and put some flannels on. It makes me quite hot to look at you in that suit. We'll try and get up a little tennis after tea.

FENWICK. Now you must n't tire yourself, Pearl. Remember those white cheeks of yours.

PEARL [*with a charming look at him*]. Oh, I shall soon get my colour back now. [*She gives him her hand to kiss and he goes out.* PEARL *takes a little mirror out of her bag and looks at herself reflectively.*] Men are very trivial, foolish creatures. They have kind hearts. But their heads. Oh, dear, oh, dear, it's lamentable. They have a mechanical intelligence. And they're so vain, poor dears, they 're *so* vain.

BESSIE. Pearl, to-morrow when we go back to London I'm going away.

PEARL. Are you? Where?

BESSIE. The Princess is going to take me over to Paris for a few days.

PEARL. Oh, is that all? Don't stay away too long. You ought to be in London just at present.

BESSIE. On my return I'm proposing to stay with the Princess.

PEARL [*calmly*]. Nonsense.

BESSIE. I was n't asking your permission, Pearl. I was telling you my plans.

PEARL [*looks at her for a moment reflectively*]. Are you going to make me a scene, too? I've already gone through two this afternoon. I'm rather tired of them.

BESSIE. Please don't be alarmed. I've got nothing more to say.

[*She makes as though to leave the room.*]

PEARL. Don't be a little fool, Bessie. You've been staying with me all the season. I can't allow you to leave my house and go to live with Flora. We don't want to go out of our way to make people gossip.

BESSIE. Please don't argue with me, Pearl. It's not my business to reproach you for anything you do. But it is n't my business either to stand by and watch you.

PEARL. You're no longer a child, Bessie.

BESSIE. I've been blind and foolish. Because I was happy and having a good time I never stopped to ask for explanations of this, that, and the other. I never thought . . . The life was gay and brilliant — it never struck me that underneath it all — oh, Pearl; don't make me say what I have in my heart, but let me go quietly.

PEARL. Bessie, dear, you must be reasonable. Think what people would say if you suddenly left my house. They'd ask all sorts of questions and Heaven knows what explanations they'd invent. People are n't charitable, you know. I don't want to be hard on you, but I can't afford to let you do a thing like that.

BESSIE. Now that I know what I do I should never respect myself again if I stayed.

PEARL. I don't know how you can be so unkind.

BESSIE. I don't want to be that, Pearl. But it's stronger than I am. I must go.

PEARL [*with emotion*]. I'm so fond of you, Bessie. You don't know how much I want you with me. After all I've seen so little of you these last few years. It's been such a comfort to me to have you. You were so pretty and young and sweet, it was like a ray of April sunshine in the house.

BESSIE. I'm afraid you think women are as trivial, foolish creatures as men, Pearl.

[PEARL *looks up and sees that* BESSIE *is not in the least taken in by the pathetic attitude.*]

PEARL [*icily*]. Take care you don't go too far, Bessie.

BESSIE. There's no need for us to quarrel. I've made up my mind and there is the end of it.

PEARL. Flora's a fool. I shall tell her that I won't have her take you away from me. You'll stay with me until you're married.

BESSIE. D' you want me to tell you that I can hardly bear to speak to you? You fill me with shame and disgust. I want never to see you again.

PEARL. Really you drive me beyond endurance. I think I must be the most patient woman in the world to put up with all I've had to put up with to-day. After all, what have I done? I was a little silly and incautious. By the fuss you all make one would think no one had ever been incautious and silly before. Besides, it has n't got anything to do with you. Why don't you mind your own business?

BESSIE [*bitterly*]. You talk as though your relations with Arthur Fenwick were perfectly natural.

PEARL. Good Heavens, you're not going to pretend you did n't know about Arthur! After all, I'm no worse than anybody else. Why, one of the reasons we Americans like London is that we can live our own lives and people accept things philosophically. Eleo Gloster, Sadie Twickenham, Maimie Hartlepool — you don't imagine they're faithful to their husbands? They did n't marry them for that.

BESSIE. Oh, Pearl, how can you? How can you? Have n't you any sense of decency at all? When I came in just now and saw you sitting on the sofa with that gross, vulgar, sensual old man — oh! [*She makes a gesture of disgust.*] You can't love him. I could have understood if — but — oh, it's so disgraceful, it's so hideous. What can you see in him? He's nothing but rich — [*She pauses and her face changes as a thought comes to her, and coming horrifies her.*] It's not because he's rich? Pearl! Oh!

PEARL. Really, Bessie, you're very silly and I'm tired of talking to you.

BESSIE. Pearl, it's not that? Answer me.

PEARL [*roughly*]. Mind your own business.

BESSIE. He was right, then, last night, when he called you that. He was so right that you did n't even notice it. A few hours later you're sitting hand in hand with him. A slut. That's what he called you. A slut! A slut!

PEARL. How dare you! Hold your tongue! How dare you!

BESSIE. A kept woman. That's what you are.

PEARL [*recovering herself*]. I'm a fool to lose my temper with you.

BESSIE. Why should you? I'm saying nothing but the truth.

PEARL. You're a silly little person, Bessie. If Arthur helps me a little that's his affair and mine. He's got more money than he knows what to do with, and it amuses him to see me spend it. I could have twenty thousand a year from him if I chose.

BESSIE. Have n't you got money of your own?

PEARL. You know exactly what I've got. Eight thousand a year. D' you think I could have got the position I have on that? You're not under the impression all the world comes to my house because of my charms, are you? I'm not. You don't think the English want us here? You don't think they like us marrying their men? Good Heavens, when you've known England as long as I have you'll realize that in their hearts they still look upon us as savages and Red Indians. We have to force ourselves upon them. They come to me because I amuse them. Very early in my career I discovered that the English can never resist getting something for nothing. If a dancer is the rage they'll see her at my house. If a fiddler is in vogue they'll hear him at my concert. I give fashion. I've got power. I've got influence. But everything I've got, my success, my reputation, my notoriety, I've bought it, bought it, bought it!

BESSIE. How humiliating.

PEARL. And finally I've bought you a husband.

BESSIE. That's not true. He loves me.

PEARL. Do you think he would have loved you if I had n't shown you to him in these surroundings, if I had n't dazzled him by the brilliant people among whom he found you? You don't know what love is made of. D' you think it's nothing that he should hear a Prime Minister pay you compliments? Of course I bought him.

BESSIE [*aghast*]. It's horrible!

PEARL. You know the truth now. It'll be very useful to you in your married life. Run away and take your little walk with

Harry Bleane. I'm going to arrange my face. [*She goes out.*]

[Bessie *is left ashamed and stunned.* Bleane *comes in.*]

Bleane. I'm afraid I've kept you waiting. I'm so sorry.

Bessie [*dully*]. It does n't matter at all.

Bleane. Where shall we go? You know the way about these parts and I don't.

Bessie. Harry, I want you to release me. I can't marry you.

Bleane [*aghast*]. Why?

Bessie. I want to go back to America. I'm frightened.

Bleane. Of me?

Bessie. Oh, no. I know that you're a dear, good creature. I'm frightened of what I may become.

Bleane. But I love you, Bessie.

Bessie. Then that's the more reason for me to go. I must tell you frankly, I'm not in love with you, I only like you. I would never have dreamt of marrying you if you had n't been who you are. I wanted to have a title. That's why Pearl married her husband and that's why the Duchesse married. Let me go, Harry.

Bleane. I knew you did n't love me, but I thought you might come to in time. I thought if I tried I could make you love me.

Bessie. You did n't know that I was nothing but a self-seeking, heartless snob.

Bleane. I don't care what you say of yourself, I know that you can be nothing but what is true and charming.

Bessie. After what you've seen last night? After what you know of this house? Are n't you disgusted with all of us?

Bleane. You can't think I could class you with the Duchesse and — [*He stops.*]

Bessie. Pearl at my age was no different from what I am. It's the life.

Bleane. But perhaps you won't want to lead it. The set you've been living in here is n't the only set in England. It makes a stir because it's in the public. Its doings are announced in the papers. But it is n't a very good set, and there are plenty of people who don't very much admire it.

Bessie. You must let me try and say what I have in my heart. And be patient with me. You think I can make myself at home in your life. I've had a hint of it, and now and then I've had a glimpse of it through Pearl's laughter and the Duchesse's sneers. It's a life of dignity, of responsibilities and of public duty.

Bleane [*with a rueful smile*]. You make it very strenuous.

Bessie. It comes naturally to the English girls of your class. They've known it all their lives and they've been brought up to lead it. But we have n't. To us it's just tedious, and its dignity is irksome. We're bored and we fall back on the only thing that offers — pleasure. You've spoken to me about your house. It means everything to you because it's associated with your childhood and all your people before you. It could only mean something to me if I loved you. And I don't.

Bleane. You've made me so wretched, I don't know what to say to you.

Bessie. If I make you wretched now, it's so that we may both be saved a great deal of unhappiness later on. I'm glad I don't care for you, for it would make it so much harder for me to go. And I've got to go. I can't marry you. I want to go home. If I ever marry I want to marry in my own country. That is my place.

Bleane. Don't you think you could wait a little before you decide finally?

Bessie. Don't put difficulties in my way. Don't you see that we're not strong enough for the life over here? It goes to our head; we lose our bearings; we put away our own code and we can't adopt the code of the country we come to. We drift. There's nothing for us to do but to amuse ourselves and we fall to pieces. But in America we're safe. And perhaps America wants us. When we come over here we're like soldiers deserting their country in time of war. Oh, I'm homesick for America! I did n't know how much it meant to me till now. Let me go back, Harry.

Bleane. If you don't want to marry me, of course I'm not going to try and make you.

Bessie. Don't be angry, and be my friend always.

BLEANE. Always.

BESSIE. After all, three months ago you did n't know me. In three months more you will have forgotten me. Then marry some English girl who can live your life and share your thoughts. And be happy.

[PEARL *comes in. She has rouged her cheeks and has once more the healthy colour which is usual with her. She is evidently jubilant.*]

PEARL. The car has just come back from London. [*Goes to French window and calls.*] Minnie.

BESSIE. I shall tell Pearl to-morrow.

BLEANE. I won't post my letters then. I'll go and get them out of the box.

BESSIE. Forgive me. [*He goes out.*]

[DUCHESSE *and* CLAY *appear at the window.*]

DUCHESSE. Did you call me?

PEARL. The car has just come back from London so it can take you to the station.

DUCHESSE. That's a mercy. I did n't at all like the idea of going to the station in the luggage cart. Where is Flora? I must say good-bye to her.

PEARL. Oh, there's plenty of time now. The car will run down in ten minutes.

[TONY *comes in, then the* PRINCESS *and* FLEMING.]

DUCHESSE. Tony, the car has returned and is going to take us to the station.

TONY. Thank God for that. I should have looked a perfect fool in that luggage cart.

CLAY. But what on earth did you send the car to London for, anyway?

PEARL. In one minute you'll see.

[FENWICK *comes in. He has changed into flannels.*]

FENWICK. Who is that gentleman that's just arrived, Pearl?

PEARL. The man of mystery.

[POLE *comes in followed by* ERNEST, *and after announcing him goes out.*]

POLE. Mr. Ernest.

DUCHESSE. Ernest!

CLAY. Ernest?

[He is a little dark man with large eyes and long hair neatly plastered down. He has the look of a hairdresser. He is dressed like a tailor's dummy, in black coat, white gloves, silk hat, patent leather boots. He is a dancing master and overwhelmingly gentlemanly. He speaks in mincing tones.]

ERNEST. Dear Lady Grayston.

PEARL [*shaking hands with him*]. I'm so glad you were able to come. [*To the others.*] You were talking about Ernest last night and I thought we would have nothing to do this evening and he would cheer and comfort us. I sent the car up to London with orders to bring him back dead or alive.

ERNEST. My dear Lady Grayston, I'm sure I'll get into no end of trouble. I had all sorts of calls to pay this afternoon and I was dining out, and I'd promised to go to a little hop that the dear Duchess of Gloster was giving. But I felt I could n't refuse you. You've always been such a good friend to me, dear Lady Grayston. You must excuse me coming in my town clothes, but your chauffeur said there was n't a moment to lose, so I came just as I am.

PEARL. But you look a perfect picture.

ERNEST. Oh, don't say that, dear Lady Grayston. I know this is n't the sort of thing one ought to wear in the country.

PEARL. You remember the Duchesse de Surennes.

ERNEST. Oh, of course I remember the Duchesse.

DUCHESSE. Dear Ernest.

ERNEST. Dear Duchesse.

DUCHESSE. I thought I was n't going to see you again, Ernest.

ERNEST. Oh, don't say that. It sounds too sad.

PEARL. It's such a pity you must go, Minnie. Ernest would have shown you all sorts of new steps.

ERNEST. Oh, dear Duchesse, you're not going the very moment I come down! This is unkind of you.

DUCHESSE [*with an effort*]. I must go. I must go.

ERNEST. Have you been practising that

little step I showed you the other day? My dear friend the Marchioness of Twickenham — not the old one, you know, the new one — is beginning to do so well.

DUCHESSE [*struggling with herself*]. Have we time, Pearl? I should like Ernest to dance just one tango with me.

PEARL. Of course there's time. Thornton, set the gramophone.

[THORNTON *at once starts it and notes of the tango tinkle out.*]

DUCHESSE. You don't mind, Ernest, do you?

ERNEST. I love to dance with you, Duchesse. [*They take up their positions.*]

DUCHESSE. Just one moment. It always makes me so nervous to dance with you, Ernest.

ERNEST. Oh, now, don't be silly, dear Duchesse. [*They begin to dance.*] Now hold your shoulders like a lady. Arch your back, my dear, arch your back. Don't look like a sack of potatoes. If you put your foot there, I shall kick it.

DUCHESSE [*plaintively*]. Ernest!

ERNEST. Now don't cry. I'm saying all this for your good, you know. What's wrong with you is that you've got no passion.

DUCHESSE. Oh, Ernest, how can you say such a thing! I've always looked upon myself as a very passionate woman.

ERNEST. I don't know anything about that, dear Duchesse, but you don't get it into your dancing. That's what I said the other day to the dear Marchioness of Twickenham — not the new one, you know, the old one; you must put passion into it, I said. That's what the tango wants, passion, passion.

DUCHESSE. I see exactly what you mean, Ernest.

ERNEST. And you must dance with your eyes as well, you know. You must look as if you had a knife in your garter and as if you'd kill me if I looked at another woman. Don't you see how I'm looking? I'm looking as though I meant, Curse her, how I love her! There!

[*Music stops and they separate.*]

DUCHESSE. I have improved, Ernest, have n't I?

ERNEST. Yes, you've improved, dear Duchesse, but you want more practice.

PEARL. Minnie, why on earth don't you stay and Ernest will give you a real lesson this evening?

ERNEST. That's what they want, Duchesse. [DUCHESSE *wrestles with her soul.*]

DUCHESSE. Tony, d' you think we can stop?

TONY. I did n't want to go 'way. It's rotten going up to town this evening. What on earth are we going to do with ourselves when we get there?

DUCHESSE. Very well, Pearl. If it'll please you, we'll stop.

PEARL. That is nice of you, Minnie.

DUCHESSE. You're very naughty sometimes, Pearl, but you have a good heart, and I can't help being fond of you.

PEARL [*with outstretched arms*]. Minnie!

DUCHESSE. Pearl!

[*They clasp one another and affectionately embrace.*]

ERNEST. What an exquisite spectacle, two ladies of title kissing one another.

BESSIE [*to* FLEMING]. They're not worth making a fuss about. I'm sailing for America next Saturday.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

A PLAY

By JOHN DRINKWATER

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TO

THE LORD CHARNWOOD

NOTE

In using for purposes of drama a personality of so wide and recent a fame as that of Abraham Lincoln, I feel that one or two observations are due to my readers and critics.

First, my purpose is that not of the historian but of the dramatist. The historical presentation of my hero has been faithfully made in many volumes; notably, in England, by Lord Charnwood in a monograph that gives a masterly analysis of Lincoln's career and character and is, it seems to me, a model of what the historian's work should be. To this book I am gratefully indebted for the material of my play. But while I have, I hope, done nothing to traverse history, I have freely telescoped its events, and imposed invention upon its movement, in such ways as I needed to shape the dramatic significance of my subject. I should add that the fictitious Burnet Hook is admitted to the historical company of Lincoln's Cabinet for the purpose of embodying certain forces that were antagonistic to the President. This was a dramatic necessity, and I chose rather to invent a character for the purpose than to invest any single known personage with sinister qualities about which there might be dispute.

Secondly, my purpose is, again, that of the dramatist, not that of the political philosopher. The issue of secession was a very intricate one, upon which high and generous opinions may be in conflict, but that I may happen to have or lack personal sympathy with Lincoln's policy and judgment in this matter is nothing. My concern is with the profoundly dramatic interest of his character, and with the inspiring example of a man who handled war nobly and with imagination.

Finally, I am an Englishman, and not a citizen of the great country that gave Lincoln birth. I have, therefore, written as an Englishman, making no attempt to achieve a "local colour" of which I have no experience, or to speak in an idiom to which I have not been bred. To have done otherwise, as I am sure any American friends that this play may have the good fortune to make will allow, would have been to treat a great subject with levity.

J. D.

Far Oakridge,
July-August, 1918

CHARACTERS

First and Second Chronicler

Scene I

Mr. Stone, *a farmer*
Mr. Cuffney, *a store-keeper*
Susan, *a servant-maid*
Mrs. Lincoln
Abraham Lincoln
William Tucker, *a merchant*
Henry Hind, *an attorney*
Elias Price, *a lay preacher*
James Macintosh, *editor of a Republican journal*

Scene II

William H. Seward, *Secretary of State*
Johnson White, Caleb Jennings } *representing Commissioners of the Confederate States*
Hawkins, *a clerk*
Lincoln
John Hay, *a Secretary*
Second Clerk
A Messenger
Third Clerk
Salmon P. Chase, *Secretary of the Treasury*
Montgomery Blair, *Postmaster-General*
Simon Cameron, Caleb Smith, Burnett Hook, Gideon Welles } *Cabinet Members*

Scene III

Mrs. Lincoln
Susan
Mrs. Goliath Blow
Mrs. Otherly
Lincoln
Mr. William Custis

Scene IV

William H. Seward
Edwin M. Stanton
Montgomery Blair
Gideon Welles
Burnett Hook
Salmon P. Chase
A Clerk
Lincoln
Hay

Scene V

General Grant
Captain Malins
Dennis, *an orderly*
A Second Orderly
Lincoln
Hay
A Young Officer
William Scott
Guards
General Meade
Captain Sone
General Robert E. Lee

Scene VI

Lincoln
Stanton
Mrs. Lincoln
Ladies and Gentlemen
Officers
John Wilkes Booth
Susan
A Doctor

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

TWO CHRONICLERS [*the two speaking together*]. Kinsmen, you shall behold
Our stage, in mimic action, mould
A man's character.

This is the wonder, always, everywhere —
Not that vast mutability which is event,
The pits and pinnacles of change,
But man's desire and valiance that range
All circumstance, and come to port unspent.

Agents are these events, these ecstasies,
And tribulations, to prove the purities
Or poor oblivions that are our being. When
Beauty and peace possess us, they are none
But as they touch the beauty and peace of men,
Nor, when our days are done,
And the last utterance of doom must fall,
Is the doom anything
Memorable for its apparelling;
The bearing of man facing it is all.

So, kinsmen, we present
This for no loud event
That is but fugitive,
But that you may behold
Our mimic action mould
The spirit of man immortally to live.

FIRST CHRONICLER. Once when a peril touched the days
Of freedom in our English ways,
And none renowned in government
Was equal found,
Came to the steadfast heart of one,
Who watched in lonely Huntingdon,
A summons, and he went,
And tyranny was bound,
And Cromwell was the lord of his event.

SECOND CHRONICLER. And in that land where voyaging
The pilgrim Mayflower came to rest,
Among the chosen, counselling,
Once, when bewilderment possessed
A people, none there was might draw
To fold the wandering thoughts of men,
And make as one the names again
Of liberty and law.

And then, from fifty fameless years
In quiet Illinois was sent
A word that still the Atlantic hears,
And Lincoln was the lord of his event.

[*The two speaking together.*] So the uncounted spirit wakes
To the birth
Of uncounted circumstance.
And time in a generation makes
Portents majestic a little story of earth
To be remembered by chance
At a fireside.
But the ardours that they bear,
The proud and invincible motions of character —
These — these abide.

SCENE I. *The parlour of* ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S *House at Springfield, Illinois, early in* 1860. MR. STONE, *a farmer, and* MR. CUFFNEY, *a store-keeper, both men of between fifty and sixty, are sitting before an early spring fire. It is dusk, but the curtains are not drawn. The men are smoking silently.*

MR. STONE [*after a pause*]. Abraham. It 's a good name for a man to bear anyway.

MR. CUFFNEY. Yes. That's right.

MR. STONE [*after another pause*]. Abraham Lincoln. I've known him forty years. Never crooked once. Well.

[*He taps his pipe reflectively on the grate. There is another pause.*]

[SUSAN, *a servant-maid, comes in, and busies herself lighting candles and drawing the curtains to.*]

SUSAN. Mrs. Lincoln has just come in. She says she'll be here directly.

MR. CUFFNEY. Thank you.

MR. STONE. Mr. Lincoln is n't home yet, I dare say?

SUSAN. No, Mr. Stone. He won't be long, with all the gentlemen coming.

MR. STONE. How would you like your master to be President of the United States, Susan?

SUSAN. I'm sure he'd do it very nicely, sir.

MR. CUFFNEY. He would have to leave Springfield, Susan, and go to live in Washington.

SUSAN. I dare say we should take to Washington very well, sir.

MR. CUFFNEY. Ah! I'm glad to hear that.

SUSAN. Mrs. Lincoln 's rather particular about the tobacco smoke.

MR. STONE. To be sure, yes, thank you, Susan.

SUSAN. The master does n't smoke, you know. And Mrs. Lincoln 's specially particular about this room.

MR. CUFFNEY. Quite so. That's very considerate of you, Susan.

[*They knock out their pipes.*]

SUSAN. Though some people might not hold with a gentleman not doing as he's a mind in his own house, as you might say.

[*She goes out.*]

MR. CUFFNEY [*after a further pause, stroking his pipe*]. I suppose there 's no doubt about the message they'll bring?

MR. STONE. No, that's settled right enough. It'll be an invitation. That's as sure as John Brown 's dead.

MR. CUFFNEY. I could never make Abraham out rightly about old John. One could n't stomach slaving more than the other, yet Abraham did n't hold with the old chap standing up against it with the sword. Bad philosophy, or something, he called it. Talked about fanatics who do nothing but get themselves at a rope's end.

MR. STONE. Abraham 's all for the Constitution. He wants the Constitution to be an honest master. There's nothing he wants like that, and he'll stand for that, firm as a Samson of the spirit, if he goes to Washington. He'd give his life to persuade the state against slaving, but until it is persuaded and makes its laws against it, he'll have nothing to do with violence in the name of laws that are n't made. That 's why old John's raiding affair stuck in his gullet.

MR. CUFFNEY. He was a brave man, going like that, with a few zealous like himself, and a handful of niggers, to free thousands.

MR. STONE. He was. And those were brave words when they took him out to hang him. "I think, my friends, you are guilty of a great wrong against God and humanity. You may dispose of me very easily. I am nearly disposed of now. But this question is still to be settled — this negro question, I mean. The end of that is not yet." I was there that day. Stonewall Jackson was there. He turned away. There was a colonel there giving orders. When it was over, "So perish all foes of the human race," he called out. But only those that were afraid of losing their slaves believed it.

MR. CUFFNEY [*after a pause*]. It was a bad thing to hang a man like that. . . . There's a song that they've made about him. [*He sings quietly.*]

John Brown's body lies a mould'ring in the grave,
But his soul goes marching on. . . .

MR. STONE. I know.

[*The two together* (*singing quietly*).] The stars of heaven are looking kindly down
On the grave of old John Brown. . . .

[*After a moment* MRS. LINCOLN *comes in. The men rise.*]

MRS. LINCOLN. Good-evening, Mr. Stone. Good-evening, Mr. Cuffney.

MR. STONE and MR. CUFFNEY. Good-evening, ma'am.

MRS. LINCOLN. Sit down, if you please.

[*They all sit.*]

MR. STONE. This is a great evening for you, ma'am.

MRS. LINCOLN. It is.

MR. CUFFNEY. What time do you expect the deputation, ma'am?

MRS. LINCOLN. They should be here at seven o'clock. [*With an inquisitive nose.*] Surely, Abraham has n't been smoking.

MR. STONE [*rising*]. Shall I open the window, ma'am? It gets close of an evening.

MRS. LINCOLN. Naturally, in March. You may leave the window, Samuel Stone. We do not smoke in the parlour.

MR. STONE [*resuming his seat*]. By no means, ma'am.

MRS. LINCOLN. I shall be obliged to you.

MR. CUFFNEY. Has Abraham decided what he will say to the invitation?

MRS. LINCOLN. He will accept it.

MR. STONE. A very right decision, if I may say so.

MRS. LINCOLN. It is.

MR. CUFFNEY. And you, ma'am, have advised him that way, I'll be bound.

MRS. LINCOLN. You said this was a great evening for me. It is, and I'll say more than I mostly do, because it is. I'm likely to go into history now with a great man. For I know better than any how great he is. I'm plain looking and I've a sharp tongue, and I've a mind that does n't always go in his easy, high way. And that's what history will see, and it will laugh a little, and say, "Poor Abraham Lincoln." That's all right, but it's not all. I've always known when he should go forward, and when he should hold back. I've watched, and watched, and what I've learnt America will profit by. There are women like that, lots of them. But I'm lucky. My work's going farther than Illinois — it's going farther than any of us can tell. I made things easy for him to think and think when we were poor, and now his thinking has brought him to this. They wanted to make him Governor of Oregon, and he would have gone and have come to nothing there. I stopped him. Now they're coming to ask him to be President, and I've told him to go.

MR. STONE. If you please, ma'am, I should like to apologise for smoking in here.

MRS. LINCOLN. That's no matter, Samuel Stone. Only, don't do it again.

MR. CUFFNEY. It 's a great place for a man to fill. Do you know how Seward takes Abraham's nomination by the Republicans?

MRS. LINCOLN. Seward is ambitious. He expected the nomination. Abraham will know how to use him.

MR. STONE. The split among the Democrats makes the election of the Republican choice a certainty, I suppose?

MRS. LINCOLN. Abraham says so.

MR. CUFFNEY. You know, it's hard to believe. When I think of the times I've sat in this room of an evening, and seen your husband come in, ma'am, with his battered hat nigh falling off the back of his head, and stuffed with papers that won't go into his pockets, and god-darning some rascal who'd done him about an assignment or a trespass, I can't think he's going up there into the eyes of the world.

MRS. LINCOLN. I've tried for years to make him buy a new hat.

MR. CUFFNEY. I have a very large selection just in from New York. Perhaps Abraham might allow me to offer him one for his departure.

MRS. LINCOLN. He might. But he'll wear the old one.

MR. STONE. Slavery and the South. They're big things he'll have to deal with. "The end of that is not yet." That's what old John Brown said, "the end of that is not yet."

[ABRAHAM LINCOLN *comes in, a greenish and crumpled top hat leaving his forehead well uncovered, his wide pockets brimming over with documents. He is fifty, and he still preserves his clean-shaven state. He kisses his wife and shakes hands with his friends.*]

LINCOLN. Well, Mary. How d' ye do, Samuel. How d' ye do, Timothy.

MR. STONE and MR. CUFFNEY. Good-evening, Abraham.

LINCOLN [*while he takes off his hat and shakes out sundry papers from the lining into a drawer*]. John Brown, did you say? Aye, John Brown. But that's not the way it's to be done. And you can't do the right thing the wrong way. That's as bad as the wrong thing, if you're going to keep the state together.

MR. CUFFNEY. Well, we'll be going. We only came in to give you good-faring, so to

say, in the great word you've got to speak this evening.

MR. STONE. It makes a humble body almost afraid of himself, Abraham, to know his friend is to be one of the great ones of the earth, with his yes and no law for these many, many thousands of folk.

LINCOLN. It makes a man humble to be chosen so, Samuel. So humble that no man but would say "No" to such bidding if he dare. To be President of this people, and trouble gathering everywhere in men's hearts. That's a searching thing. Bitterness, and scorn, and wrestling often with men I shall despise, and perhaps nothing truly done at the end. But I must go. Yes. Thank you, Samuel; thank you, Timothy. Just a glass of that cordial, Mary, before they leave. [*He goes to a cupboard.*] May the devil smudge that girl! [*Calling at the door.*] Susan! Susan Deddington! Where's that darnation cordial?

MRS. LINCOLN. It's all right, Abraham. I told the girl to keep it out. The cupboard's choked with papers.

SUSAN [*coming in with bottle and glasses*]. I'm sure I'm sorry. I was told —

LINCOLN. All right, all right, Susan. Get along with you.

SUSAN. Thank you, sir. [*She goes.*]

LINCOLN [*pouring out drink*]. Poor hospitality for whiskey-drinking rascals like yourselves. But the thought's good.

MR. STONE. Don't mention it, Abraham.

MR. CUFFNEY. We wish you well, Abraham. Our compliments, ma'am. And God bless America! Samuel, I give you the United States, and Abraham Lincoln.

[MR. CUFFNEY *and* MR. STONE *drink.*]

MRS. LINCOLN. Thank you.

LINCOLN. Samuel, Timothy — I drink to the hope of honest friends. Mary, to friendship. I'll need that always, for I've a queer, anxious heart. And, God bless America! [*He and* MRS. LINCOLN *drink.*]

MR. STONE. Well, good-night, Abraham. Good-night, ma'am.

MR. CUFFNEY. Good-night, good-night.

MRS. LINCOLN. Good-night, Mr. Stone. Good-night, Mr. Cuffney.

LINCOLN. Good-night, Samuel. Good-night, Timothy. And thank you for coming.

[MR. STONE *and* MR. CUFFNEY *go out.*]

MRS. LINCOLN. You'd better see them in here.

LINCOLN. Good. Five minutes to seven. You're sure about it, Mary?

MRS. LINCOLN. Yes. Are n't you?

LINCOLN. We mean to set bounds to slavery. The South will resist. They may try to break away from the Union. That cannot be allowed. If the Union is set aside America will crumble. The saving of it may mean blood.

MRS. LINCOLN. Who is to shape it all if you don't?

LINCOLN. There's nobody. I know it.

MRS. LINCOLN. Then go.

LINCOLN. Go.

MRS. LINCOLN [*after a moment*]. This hat is a disgrace to you, Abraham. You pay no heed to what I say, and you think it does n't matter. A man like you ought to think a little about gentility.

LINCOLN. To be sure. I forget.

MRS. LINCOLN. You don't. You just don't heed. Samuel Stone's been smoking in here.

LINCOLN. He's a careless, poor fellow.

MRS. LINCOLN. He is, and a fine example you set him. You don't care whether he makes my parlour smell poison or not.

LINCOLN. Of course I do —

MRS. LINCOLN. You don't. Your head is too stuffed with things to think about my ways. I've got neighbours if you have n't.

LINCOLN. Well, now, your neighbours are mine, I suppose.

MRS. LINCOLN. Then why won't you consider appearances a little?

LINCOLN. Certainly. I must.

MRS. LINCOLN. Will you get a new hat?

LINCOLN. Yes, I must see about it.

MRS. LINCOLN. When?

LINCOLN. In a day or two. Before long.

MRS. LINCOLN. Abraham, I've got a better temper than anybody will ever guess.

LINCOLN. You have, my dear. And you need it, I confess. [SUSAN *comes in.*]

SUSAN. The gentlemen have come.

MRS. LINCOLN. I'll come to them.

SUSAN. Does the master want a handkerchief, ma'am? He didn't take one this morning.

LINCOLN. It's no matter now, Susan.

SUSAN. If you please, I've brought you one, sir. [*She gives it to him, and goes.*]

MRS. LINCOLN. I'll send them in. Abraham, I believe in you.

LINCOLN. I know, I know.

[MRS. LINCOLN *goes out.* LINCOLN *moves to a map of the United States that is hanging on the wall, and stands silently looking at it. After a few moments* SUSAN *comes to the door.*]

SUSAN. This way, please.

[*She shows in* WILLIAM TUCKER, *a florid, prosperous merchant;* HENRY HIND, *an alert little attorney;* ELIAS PRICE, *a lean lay preacher; and* JAMES MACINTOSH, *the editor of a Republican journal.* SUSAN *goes.*]

TUCKER. Mr. Lincoln. Tucker my name is — William Tucker. [*He presents his companions.*] Mr. Henry Hind — follows your profession, Mr. Lincoln. Leader of the bar in Ohio. Mr. Elias Price, of Pennsylvania. You've heard him preach, maybe. James Macintosh you know. I come from Chicago.

LINCOLN. Gentlemen, at your service. How d' ye do, James. Will you be seated?

[*They sit round the table.*]

TUCKER. I have the honour to be chairman of this delegation. We are sent from Chicago by the Republican Convention, to enquire whether you will accept their invitation to become the Republican candidate for the office of President of the United States.

PRICE. The Convention is aware, Mr. Lincoln, that under the circumstances, seeing that the Democrats have split, this is more than an invitation to candidature. Their nominee is almost certain to be elected.

LINCOLN. Gentlemen, I am known to one of you only. Do you know my many disqualifications for this work?

HIND. It's only fair to say that they have been discussed freely.

LINCOLN. There are some, shall we say graces, that I lack. Washington does not altogether neglect these.

TUCKER. They have been spoken of. But these are days, Mr. Lincoln, if I may say so, too difficult, too dangerous, for these to weigh at the expense of other qualities that you were considered to possess.

LINCOLN. Seward and Hook have both had great experience.

MACINTOSH. Hook had no strong support. For Seward, there are doubts as to his discretion.

LINCOLN. Do not be under any misunderstanding, I beg you. I aim at moderation so far as it is honest. But I am a very stubborn man, gentlemen. If the South insists upon the extension of slavery, and claims the right to secede, as you know it very well may do, and the decision lies with me, it will mean resistance, inexorable, with blood if needs be. I would have everybody's mind clear as to that.

PRICE. It will be for you to decide, and we believe you to be an upright man, Mr Lincoln.

LINCOLN. Seward and Hook would be difficult to carry as subordinates.

TUCKER. But they will have to be carried so, and there's none likelier for the job than you.

LINCOLN. Will your Republican Press stand by me for a principle, James, whatever comes?

MACINTOSH. There's no other man we would follow so readily.

LINCOLN. If you send me, the South will have little but derision for your choice.

HIND. We believe that you'll last out their laughter.

LINCOLN. I can take any man's ridicule — I'm trained to it by a . . . somewhat odd figure that it pleased God to give me, if I may so far be pleasant with you. But this slavery business will be long, and deep, and bitter. I know it. If you do me this honour, gentlemen, you must look to me for no compromise in this matter. If abolition comes in due time by constitutional means, good. I want it. But, while we will not force abolition, we will give slavery no

approval, and we will not allow it to extend its boundaries by one yard. The determination is in my blood. When I was a boy I made a trip to New Orleans, and there I saw them, chained, beaten, kicked as a man would be ashamed to kick a thieving dog. And I saw a young girl driven up and down the room that the bidders might satisfy themselves. And I said then, "If ever I get a chance to hit that thing, I'll hit it hard." [*A pause.*]

You have no conditions to make?

TUCKER. None.

LINCOLN [*rising*]. Mrs. Lincoln and I would wish you to take supper with us.

TUCKER. That's very kind, I'm sure. And your answer, Mr. Lincoln?

LINCOLN. When you came, you did not know me, Mr. Tucker. You may have something to say now not for my ears.

TUCKER. Nothing in the world, I assure—

LINCOLN. I will prepare Mrs. Lincoln. You will excuse me for no more than a minute. [*He goes out.*]

TUCKER. Well, we might have chosen a handsomer article, but I doubt whether we could have chosen a better.

HIND. He would make a great judge — if you were n't prosecuting.

PRICE. I'd tell most people, but I'd ask that man.

TUCKER. He has n't given us yes or no yet. Why should he leave us like that, as though plain was n't plain?

HIND. Perhaps he wanted a thought by himself first.

MACINTOSH. It was n't that. But he was right. Abraham Lincoln sees deeper into men's hearts than most. He knows this day will be a memory to us all our lives. Under his eye, which of you could have given play to any untoward thought that had started in you against him since you came into this room? But, leaving you, he knew you could test yourselves to your own ease, and speak the more confident for it, and, if you found yourselves clean of doubt, carry it all the happier in your minds after. Is there a doubt among us?

TUCKER. }
HIND. } No, none.
PRICE. }

MACINTOSH. Then, Mr. Tucker, ask him again when he comes back.

TUCKER. I will.

[*They sit in silence for a moment.*]

[LINCOLN *comes in again, back to his place at the table.*]

LINCOLN. I would n't have you think it graceless of me to be slow in my answer. But once given, it's for the deep good or the deep ill of all this country. In the face of that a man may well ask himself twenty times, when he's twenty times sure. You make no qualification, any one among you?

TUCKER. None. The invitation is as I put it when we sat down. And I would add that we are, all of us, proud to bear it to a man as to whom we feel there is none so fitted to receive it.

LINCOLN. I thank you. I accept. [*He rises, the others with him. He goes to the door and calls.*] Susan.

[*There is silence.* SUSAN *comes in.*]

SUSAN. Yes, Mr. Lincoln.

LINCOLN. Take these gentlemen to Mrs. Lincoln. I will follow at once.

[*The four men go with* SUSAN. LINCOLN *stands silently for a moment. He goes again to the map and looks at it. He then turns to the table again, and kneels beside it, possessed and deliberate, burying his face in his hands.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE TWO CHRONICLERS. Lonely is the man who understands.
Lonely is vision that leads a man away
From the pasture-lands,
From the furrows of corn and the brown loads of hay,
To the mountain-side.
To the high places where contemplation brings
All his adventurings
Among the sowers and the tillers on the wide
Valleys to one fused experience,
That shall control
The courses of his soul,
And give his hand
Courage and continence.

THE FIRST CHRONICLER. Shall a man
understand,
He shall know bitterness because his kind,
Being perplexed of mind,
Hold issues even that are nothing mated.
And he shall give
Counsel out of his wisdom that none shall
hear;
And steadfast in vain persuasion must he
live,
And unabated
Shall his temptation be.

SECOND CHRONICLER. Coveting the little, the instant gain,
The brief security,
And easy-tongued renown,
Many will mock the vision that his brain
Builds to a far, unmeasured monument,
And many bid his resolutions down
To the wages of content.

FIRST CHRONICLER. A year goes by.
[*The two together.*] Here contemplate
A heart, undaunted to possess
Itself among the glooms of fate,
In vision and in loneliness.

SCENE II. *Ten months later. Seward's room at Washington.* WILLIAM H. SEWARD, *Secretary of State, is seated at his table with* JOHNSON WHITE *and* CALEB JENNINGS, *representing the Commissioners of the Confederate States.*

WHITE. It's the common feeling in the South, Mr. Seward, that you're the one man at Washington to see this thing with large imagination. I say this with no disrespect to the President.

SEWARD. I appreciate your kindness, Mr. White. But the Union is the Union — you can't get over that. We are faced with a plain fact. Seven of the Southern States have already declared for secession. The President feels — and I may say that I and my colleagues are with him — that to break up the country like that means the decline of America.

JENNINGS. But everything might be done by compromise, Mr. Seward. Withdraw your garrison from Fort Sumter, Beauregard will be instructed to take no further action, South Carolina will be satisfied with the recognition of her authority, and, as likely as not, be willing to give the lead to the other states in reconsidering secession.

SEWARD. It is certainly a very attractive and, I conceive, a humane proposal.

WHITE. By furthering it you might be the saviour of the country from civil war, Mr. Seward.

SEWARD. The President dwelt on his resolution to hold Fort Sumter in his inaugural address. It will be difficult to persuade him to go back on that. He's firm in his decisions.

WHITE. There are people who would call him stubborn. Surely if it were put to him tactfully that so simple a course might avert incalculable disaster, no man would nurse his dignity to the point of not yielding. I speak plainly, but it's a time for plain speaking. Mr. Lincoln is doubtless a man of remarkable qualities: on the two occasions when I have spoken to him I have not been unimpressed. That is so, Mr. Jennings?

JENNINGS. Certainly.

WHITE. But what does his experience of great affairs of state amount to beside yours, Mr. Seward? He must know how much he depends on certain members of his Cabinet, I might say upon a certain member, for advice.

SEWARD. We have to move warily.

JENNINGS. Naturally. A man is sensitive, doubtless, in his first taste of office.

SEWARD. My support of the President is, of course, unquestionable.

WHITE. Oh, entirely. But how can your support be more valuable than in lending him your unequalled understanding?

SEWARD. The whole thing is coloured in his mind by the question of slavery.

JENNINGS. Disabuse his mind. Slavery is nothing. Persuade him to withdraw from Fort Sumter, and slavery can be settled round a table. You know there's a considerable support even for abolition in the South itself. If the trade has to be allowed in some districts, what is that compared to the disaster of civil war?

WHITE. We do not believe that the

Southern States wish with any enthusiasm to secede. They merely wish to establish their right to do so. Acknowledge that by evacuating Fort Sumter, and nothing will come of it but a perfectly proper concession to an independence of spirit that is not disloyal to the Union at heart.

SEWARD. You understand, of course, that I can say nothing officially.

JENNINGS. These are nothing but informal suggestions.

SEWARD. But I may tell you that I am not unsympathetic.

WHITE. We were sure that that would be so.

SEWARD. And my word is not without influence.

JENNINGS. It can be used to bring you very great credit, Mr. Seward.

SEWARD. In the mean time, you will say nothing of this interview, beyond making your reports, which should be confidential.

WHITE. You may rely upon us.

SEWARD [*rising with the others*]. Then I will bid you good-morning.

WHITE. We are profoundly sensible of the magnanimous temper in which we are convinced you will conduct this grave business. Good-morning, Mr. Seward.

JENNINGS. And I —

[*There is a knock at the door.*]

SEWARD. Yes — come in.

[A CLERK *comes in.*]

CLERK. The President is coming up the stairs, sir.

SEWARD. Thank you. [THE CLERK *goes.*] This is unfortunate. Say nothing, and go at once.

[LINCOLN *comes in, now whiskered and bearded.*]

LINCOLN. Good-morning, Mr. Seward. Good-morning, gentlemen.

SEWARD. Good-morning, Mr. President. And I am obliged to you for calling, gentlemen. Good-morning.

[*He moves towards the door.*]

LINCOLN. Perhaps these gentlemen could spare me ten minutes.

WHITE. It might not —

LINCOLN. Say five minutes.

JENNINGS. Perhaps you would —

LINCOLN. I am anxious always for any opportunity to exchange views with our friends of the South. Much enlightenment may be gained in five minutes. Be seated, I beg you — if Mr. Seward will allow us.

SEWARD. By all means. Shall I leave you?

LINCOLN. Leave us — but why? I may want your support, Mr. Secretary, if we should not wholly agree. Be seated, gentlemen. [SEWARD *places a chair for* LINCOLN, *and they sit at the table.*] You have messages for us?

WHITE. Well, no, we can't say that.

LINCOLN. No messages? Perhaps I am inquisitive?

SEWARD. These gentlemen are anxious to sound any moderating influences.

LINCOLN. I trust they bring moderating influences with them. You will find me a ready listener, gentlemen.

JENNINGS. It's a delicate matter, Mr. Lincoln. Ours is just an informal visit.

LINCOLN. Quite, quite. But we shall lose nothing by knowing each other's minds.

WHITE. Shall we tell the President what we came to say, Mr. Seward?

LINCOLN. I shall be grateful. If I should fail to understand, Mr. Seward, no doubt, will enlighten me.

JENNINGS. We thought it hardly worth while to trouble you at so early a stage.

LINCOLN. So early a stage of what?

JENNINGS. I mean —

SEWARD. These gentlemen, in a common anxiety for peace, were merely seeking the best channel through which suggestions could be made.

LINCOLN. To whom?

SEWARD. To the government.

LINCOLN. The head of the government is here.

WHITE. But —

LINCOLN. Come, gentlemen. What is it?

JENNINGS. It's this matter of Fort Sumter, Mr. President. If you withdraw your garrison from Fort Sumter it won't be looked upon as weakness in you. It will merely be looked upon as a concession

to a natural privilege. We believe that the South at heart does not want secession. It wants to establish the right to decide for itself.

LINCOLN. The South wants the stamp of national approval upon slavery. It can't have it.

WHITE. Surely that's not the point. There's no law in the South against slavery.

LINCOLN. Laws come from opinion, Mr. White. The South knows it.

JENNINGS. Mr. President, if I may say so, you don't quite understand.

LINCOLN. Does Mr. Seward understand?

WHITE. We believe so.

LINCOLN. You are wrong. He does n't understand, because you did n't mean him to. I don't blame you. You think you are acting for the best. You think you've got an honest case. But I'll put your case for you, and I'll put it naked. Many people in this country want abolition; many don't. I'll say nothing for the moment as to the rights and wrongs of it. But every man, whether he wants it or not, knows it may come. Why does the South propose secession? Because it knows abolition may come, and it wants to avoid it. It wants more: it wants the right to extend the slave foundation. We've all been to blame for slavery, but we in the North have been willing to mend our ways. You have not. So you'll secede, and make your own laws. But you were n't prepared for resistance; you don't want resistance. And you hope that if you can tide over the first crisis and make us give way, opinion will prevent us from opposing you with force again, and you'll be able to get your own way about the slave business by threats. That's your case. You did n't say so to Mr. Seward, but it is. Now, I'll give you my answer. Gentlemen, it's no good hiding this thing in a corner. It's got to be settled. I said the other day that Fort Sumter would be held as long as we could hold it. I said it because I know exactly what it means. Why are you investing it? Say, if you like, it's to establish your right of secession with no purpose of exercising it. Why do you want to establish that right? Because now we will allow no extension of slavery, and because some day we may abolish it. You can't deny it; there's no other answer.

JENNINGS. I see how it is. You may force freedom as much as you like, but we are to beware how we force slavery.

LINCOLN. It could n't be put better, Mr. Jennings. That's what the Union means. It is a Union that stands for common right. That is its foundation — that is why it is for every honest man to preserve it. Be clear about this issue. If there is war, it will not be on the slave question. If the South is loyal to the Union, it can fight slave legislation by constitutional means, and win its way if it can. If it claims the right to secede, then to preserve this country from disruption, to maintain that right to which every state pledged itself when the Union was won for us by our fathers, war may be the only way. We won't break up the Union, and you shan't. In your hands, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. You can have no conflict without yourselves being the aggressors. I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, do not allow it to break our bonds of affection. That is our answer. Tell them that. Will you tell them that?

WHITE. You are determined?

LINCOLN. I beg you to tell them.

JENNINGS. It shall be as you wish.

LINCOLN. Implore them to order Beauregard's return. You can telegraph it now, from here. Will you do that?

WHITE. If you wish it.

LINCOLN. Earnestly. Mr. Seward, will you please place a clerk at their service. Ask for an answer.

[SEWARD *rings a bell.* A CLERK *comes in.*]

SEWARD. Give these gentlemen a private wire. Place yourself at their disposal.

CLERK. Yes, sir.

[WHITE *and* JENNINGS *go out with the* CLERK. *For a moment* LINCOLN *and* SEWARD *are silent,* LINCOLN *pacing the room,* SEWARD *standing at the table.*]

LINCOLN. Seward, this won't do.

SEWARD. You don't suspect —

LINCOLN. I do not. But let us be plain. No man can say how wisely, but Providence has brought me to the leadership of this country, with a task before me greater than that which rested on Washington himself. When I made my Cabinet, you were the first man I chose. I do not regret it. I think I never shall. But remember, faith earns faith. What is it? Why did n't those men come to see me?

SEWARD. They thought my word might bear more weight with you than theirs.

LINCOLN. Your word for what?

SEWARD. Discretion about Fort Sumter.

LINCOLN. Discretion?

SEWARD. It's devastating, this thought of war.

LINCOLN. It is. Do you think I'm less sensible of that than you? War should be impossible. But you can only make it impossible by destroying its causes. Don't you see that to withdraw from Fort Sumter is to do nothing of the kind? If one half of this country claims the right to disown the Union, the claim in the eyes of every true guardian among us must be a cause for war, unless we hold the Union to be a false thing instead of the public consent to decent principles of life that it is. If we withdraw from Fort Sumter, we do nothing to destroy that cause. We can only destroy it by convincing them that secession is a betrayal of their trust. Please God we may do so.

SEWARD. Has there, perhaps, been some timidity in making all this clear to the country?

LINCOLN. Timidity? And you were talking of discretion.

SEWARD. I mean that perhaps our policy has not been sufficiently defined.

LINCOLN. And have you not concurred in all our decisions? Do not deceive yourself. You urge me to discretion in one breath and tax me with timidity in the next. While there was hope that they might call Beauregard back out of their own good sense, I was determined to say nothing to inflame them. Do you call that timidity? Now their intention is clear, and you've heard me speak this morning clearly also. And now you talk about discretion — you, who call what was discretion at the right time, timidity, now counsel timidity at the wrong time, and call it discretion. Seward, you may think I'm simple, but I can see your mind working as plainly as you might see the innards of a clock. You can bring great gifts to this government, with your zeal, and your administrative experience, and your love of men. Don't spoil it by thinking I've got a dull brain.

SEWARD [*slowly*]. Yes, I see. I've not been thinking quite clearly about it all.

LINCOLN [*taking a paper from his pocket*]. Here's the paper you sent me. "Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration. Great Britain . . . Russia . . . Mexico . . . policy. Either the President must control this himself, or devolve it on some member of his Cabinet. It is not in my especial province, but I neither seek to evade nor assume responsibility."

[*There is a pause, the two men looking at each other without speaking.* LINCOLN *hands the paper to* SEWARD, *who holds it for a moment, tears it up, and throws it into his basket.*]

SEWARD. I beg your pardon.

LINCOLN [*taking his hand*]. That's brave of you.

[JOHN HAY, *a Secretary, comes in.*]

HAY. There's a messenger from Major Anderson, sir. He's ridden straight from Fort Sumter.

LINCOLN. Take him to my room. No, bring him here. [HAY *goes.*]

SEWARD. What does it mean?

LINCOLN. I don't like the sound of it. [*He rings a bell.* A CLERK *comes in.*] Are there any gentlemen of the Cabinet in the house?

CLERK. Mr. Chase and Mr. Blair, I believe, sir.

LINCOLN. My compliments to them, and will they be prepared to see me here at once if necessary. Send the same message to any other ministers you can find.

CLERK. Yes, sir. [*He goes.*]

LINCOLN. We may have to decide now — now. [HAY *shows in a perspiring and*

dust-covered MESSENGER, *and retires.*] From Major Anderson?

THE MESSENGER. Yes, sir. Word of mouth, sir.

LINCOLN. Your credentials?

THE MESSENGER [*giving* LINCOLN *a paper*]. Here, sir.

LINCOLN [*glancing at it*]. Well?

THE MESSENGER. Major Anderson presents his duty to the government. He can hold the Fort three days more without provisions and reinforcements.

[LINCOLN *rings the bell, and waits until a third* CLERK *comes in.*]

LINCOLN. See if Mr. White and Mr. Jennings have had any answer yet. Mr. — what's his name?

SEWARD. Hawkins.

LINCOLN. Mr. Hawkins is attending to them. And ask Mr. Hay to come here.

CLERK. Yes, sir.

[*He goes.* LINCOLN *sits at the table and writes.* HAY *comes in.*]

LINCOLN [*writing*]. Mr. Hay, do you know where General Scott is?

HAY. At headquarters, I think, sir.

LINCOLN. Take this to him yourself and bring an answer back.

HAY. Yes, sir.

[*He takes the note, and goes.*]

LINCOLN. Are things very bad at the Fort?

THE MESSENGER. The major says three days, sir. Most of us would have said twenty-four hours. [*A knock at the door.*]

SEWARD. Yes.

[HAWKINS *comes in.*]

HAWKINS. Mr. White is just receiving a message across the wire, sir.

LINCOLN. Ask him to come here directly he's finished.

HAWKINS. Yes, sir.

[*He goes.* LINCOLN *goes to a far door and opens it. He speaks to the* MESSENGER.]

LINCOLN. Will you wait in here?

[*The* MESSENGER *goes through.*]

SEWARD. Do you mind if I smoke?

LINCOLN. Not at all, not at all. [SEWARD *lights a cigar.*] Three days. If White's message does n't help us — three days.

SEWARD. But surely we must withdraw as a matter of military necessity now.

LINCOLN. Why does n't White come? [SEWARD *goes to the window and throws it up. He stands looking down into the street.* LINCOLN *stands at the table looking fixedly at the door. After a moment or two there is a knock.*] Come in. [HAWKINS *shows in* WHITE *and* JENNINGS, *and goes out.* SEWARD *closes the window.*] Well?

WHITE. I'm sorry. They won't give way.

LINCOLN. You told them all I said?

JENNINGS. Everything.

LINCOLN. It's critical.

WHITE. They are definite.

[LINCOLN *paces once or twice up and down the room, standing again at his place at the table.*]

LINCOLN. They leave no opening?

WHITE. I regret to say, none.

LINCOLN. It's a grave decision. Terribly grave. Thank you, gentlemen. Good-morning.

WHITE *and* JENNINGS. Good-morning, gentlemen. [*They go out.*]

LINCOLN. My God! Seward, we need great courage, great faith. [*He rings the bell. The* SECOND CLERK *comes in.*] Did you take my messages?

THE CLERK. Yes, sir. Mr. Chase and Mr. Blair are here. The other ministers are coming immediately.

LINCOLN. Ask them to come here at once. And send Mr. Hay in directly he returns.

THE CLERK. Yes, sir. [*He goes.*]

LINCOLN [*after a pause*]. "There is a tide in the affairs of men . . . " Do you read Shakespeare, Seward?

SEWARD. Shakespeare? No.

LINCOLN. Ah! [SALMON P. CHASE, *Secretary of the Treasury, and* MONTGOMERY BLAIR, *Postmaster-General, come in.*] Good-morning, Mr. Chase, Mr. Blair.

SEWARD. Good-morning, gentlemen.

BLAIR. Good-morning, Mr. President. How d' ye do, Mr. Seward.

CHASE. Good-morning, Mr. President. Something urgent?

LINCOLN. Let us be seated. [*As they draw chairs up to the table, the other members of the Cabinet,* SIMON CAMERON, CALEB

SMITH, BURNETT HOOK, *and* GIDEON WELLES, *come in. There is an exchange of greetings, while they arrange themselves round the table.*] Gentlemen, we meet in a crisis, the most fateful, perhaps, that has ever faced any government in this country. It can be stated briefly. A message has just come from Anderson. He can hold Fort Sumter three days at most unless we send men and provisions.

CAMERON. How many men?

LINCOLN. I shall know from Scott in a few minutes how many are necessary.

WELLES. Suppose we have n't as many.

LINCOLN. Then it's a question of provisioning. We may not be able to do enough to be effective. The question is whether we shall do as much as we can.

HOOK. If we withdrew altogether, would n't it give the South a lead towards compromise, as being an acknowledgment of their authority, while leaving us free to plead military necessity if we found public opinion dangerous?

LINCOLN. My mind is clear. To do less than we can do, whatever that may be, will be fundamentally to allow the South's claim to right of secession. That is my opinion. If you evade the question now, you will have to answer it to-morrow.

BLAIR. I agree with the President.

HOOK. We ought to defer action as long as possible. I consider that we should withdraw.

LINCOLN. Don't you see that to withdraw may postpone war, but that it will make it inevitable in the end?

SMITH. It is inevitable if we resist.

LINCOLN. I fear it will be so. But in that case we shall enter it with uncompromised principles. Mr. Chase?

CHASE. It is difficult. But, on the whole, my opinion is with yours, Mr. President.

LINCOLN. And you, Seward?

SEWARD. I respect your opinion, but I must differ. [*A knock at the door.*]

LINCOLN. Come in.

[HAY *comes in. He gives a letter to* LINCOLN *and goes.*]

[*Reading.*] Scott says twenty thousand men.

SEWARD. We have n't ten thousand ready.

LINCOLN. It remains a question of sending provisions. I charge you, all of you, to weigh this thing with all your understanding. To temporise now, cannot, in my opinion, avert war. To speak plainly to the world in standing by our resolution to hold Fort Sumter with all our means, and in a plain declaration that the Union must be preserved, will leave us with a clean cause, simply and loyally supported. I tremble at the thought of war. But we have in our hands a sacred trust. It is threatened. We have had no thought of aggression. We have been the aggressed. Persuasion has failed, and I conceive it to be our duty to resist. To withhold supplies from Anderson would be to deny that duty. Gentlemen, the matter is before you. [*A pause.*] For provisioning the fort? [LINCOLN, CHASE, *and* BLAIR *hold up their hands.*] For immediate withdrawal? [SEWARD, CAMERON, SMITH, HOOK, *and* WELLES *hold up their hands. There is a pause of some moments.*] Gentlemen, I may have to take upon myself the responsibility of over-riding your vote. It will be for me to satisfy Congress and public opinion. Should I receive any resignations? [*There is silence.*] I thank you for your consideration, gentlemen. That is all. [*They rise, and the Ministers, with the exception of* SEWARD, *go out, talking as they pass beyond the door.*] You are wrong, Seward, wrong.

SEWARD. I believe you. I respect your judgment even as far as that. But I must speak as I feel.

LINCOLN. May I speak to this man alone?

SEWARD. Certainly.

[*He goes out.* LINCOLN *stands motionless for a moment. Then he moves to a map of the United States, much larger than the one in his Illinois home, and looks at it as he did there. He goes to the far door and opens it.*]

LINCOLN. Will you come in? [*The* MESSENGER *comes.*] Can you ride back to Major Anderson at once?

THE MESSENGER. Yes, sir.

LINCOLN. Tell him that we cannot reinforce him immediately. We have n't the men.

THE MESSENGER. Yes, sir.

LINCOLN. And say that the first convoy of supplies will leave Washington this evening.

THE MESSENGER. Yes, sir.

LINCOLN. Thank you. [*The* MESSENGER *goes.* LINCOLN *stands at the table for a moment; he rings the bell.* HAWKINS *comes in.*] Mr. Hay, please.

HAWKINS. Yes, sir.

[*He goes, and a moment later* HAY *comes in.*]

LINCOLN. Go to General Scott. Ask him to come to me at once.

HAY. Yes, sir. [*He goes.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE TWO CHRONICLERS. You who have gone gathering
Cornflowers and meadowsweet,
Heard the hazels glancing down
On September eves,
Seen the homeward rooks on wing
Over fields of golden wheat,
And the silver cups that crown
Water-lily leaves;

You who know the tenderness
Of old men at eve-tide,
Coming from the hedgerows,
Coming from the plough,
And the wandering caress
Of winds upon the woodside,
When the crying yaffle goes
Underneath the bough;

FIRST CHRONICLER. You who mark the flowing
Of sap upon the May-time,
And the waters welling,
From the watershed,
You who count the growing
Of harvest and hay-time,
Knowing these the telling
Of your daily bread;

SECOND CHRONICLER. You who cherish courtesy
With your fellows at your gate,
And about your hearthstone sit
Under love's decrees,
You who know that death will be
Speaking with you soon or late,

[*The two together.*] Kinsmen, what is mother wit
But the light of these?
Knowing these, what is there more
For learning in your little years?
Are not these all gospels bright
Shining on your day?
How then shall your hearts be sore
With envy and her brood of fears,
How forget the words of light
From the mountain-way? . . .

Blessed are the merciful. . . .
Does not every threshold seek
Meadows and the flight of birds
For compassion still?
Blessed are the merciful. . . .
Are we pilgrims yet to speak
Out of Olivet the words
Of knowledge and good-will?

FIRST CHRONICLER. Two years of darkness, and this man but grows
Greater in resolution, more constant in compassion.
He goes
The way of dominion in pitiful, high-hearted fashion.

SCENE III. *Nearly two years later. A small reception room at the White House.* MRS. LINCOLN, *dressed in a fashion perhaps a little too considered, despairing as she now does of any sartorial grace in her husband, and acutely conscious that she must meet this necessity of office alone, is writing. She rings the bell, and* SUSAN, *who has taken her promotion more philosophically, comes in.*

MRS. LINCOLN. Admit any one who calls, Susan. And enquire whether the President will be in to tea.

SUSAN. Mr. Lincoln has just sent word that he will be in.

MRS. LINCOLN. Very well. [SUSAN *is going.*] Susan.

SUSAN. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. LINCOLN. You still say Mr. Lincoln. You should say the President.

SUSAN. Yes, ma'am. But you see, ma'am, it's difficult after calling him Mr. Lincoln for fifteen years.

MRS. LINCOLN. But you must remember. Everybody calls him the President now.

SUSAN. No, ma'am. There's a good many people call him Father Abraham now. And there's some that like him even better than that. Only to-day Mr. Coldpenny, at the stores, said, "Well, Susan, and how's old Abe this morning?"

MRS. LINCOLN. I hope you don't encourage them.

SUSAN. Oh, no, ma'am. I always refer to him as Mr. Lincoln.

MRS. LINCOLN. Yes, but you must say the President.

SUSAN. I'm afraid I shan't ever learn, ma'am.

MRS. LINCOLN. You must try.

SUSAN. Yes, of course, ma'am.

MRS. LINCOLN. And bring any visitors up.

SUSAN. Yes, ma'am. There's a lady waiting now.

MRS. LINCOLN. Then why did n't you say so?

SUSAN. That's what I was going to, ma'am, when you began to talk about Mr. — I mean the President, ma'am.

MRS. LINCOLN. Well, show her up.

[SUSAN *goes.* MRS. LINCOLN *closes her writing desk.* SUSAN *returns, showing in* MRS. GOLIATH BLOW.]

SUSAN. Mrs. Goliath Blow. [*She goes.*]

MRS. BLOW. Good-afternoon, Mrs. Lincoln.

MRS. LINCOLN. Good-afternoon, Mrs. Blow. Sit down, please. [*They sit.*]

MRS. BLOW. And is the dear President well?

MRS. LINCOLN. Yes. He's rather tired.

MRS. BLOW. Of course, to be sure. This dreadful war. But I hope he is not getting tired of the war.

MRS. LINCOLN. It's a constant anxiety for him. He feels his responsibility very deeply.

MRS. BLOW. To be sure. But you must n't let him get war-weary. These monsters in the South have got to be stamped out.

MRS. LINCOLN. I don't think you need be afraid of the President's firmness.

MRS. BLOW. Oh, of course not. I was only saying to Goliath yesterday, "The President will never give way till he has the South squealing," and Goliath agreed.

[SUSAN *comes in.*]

SUSAN. Mrs. Otherly, ma'am.

MRS. LINCOLN. Show Mrs. Otherly in.

[SUSAN *goes.*]

MRS. BLOW. Oh, that dreadful woman! I believe she wants the war to stop.

SUSAN [*at the door.*] Mrs. Otherly.

[MRS. OTHERLY *comes in and* SUSAN *goes.*]

MRS. LINCOLN. Good-afternoon, Mrs. Otherly. You know Mrs. Goliath Blow?

MRS. OTHERLY. Yes. Good-afternoon.

[*She sits.*]

MRS. BLOW. Goliath says the war will go on for another three years at least.

MRS. OTHERLY. Three years? That would be terrible, would n't it?

MRS. BLOW. We must be prepared to make sacrifices.

MRS. OTHERLY. Yes.

MRS. BLOW. It makes my blood boil to think of those people.

MRS. OTHERLY. I used to know a lot of them. Some of them were very kind and nice.

MRS. BLOW. That was just their cunning, depend on it. I'm afraid there's a good deal of disloyalty among us. Shall we see the dear President this afternoon, Mrs. Lincoln?

MRS. LINCOLN. He will be here directly, I think.

MRS. BLOW. You're looking wonderfully well, with all the hard work that you have to do. I've really had to drop some of mine. And with expenses going up, it's all very lowering, don't you think? Goliath and I have had to reduce several of our subscriptions. But, of course, we all have to deny ourselves something. Ah, good-afternoon, dear Mr. President.

[LINCOLN *comes in.* THE LADIES *rise and shake hands with him.*]

LINCOLN. Good-afternoon, ladies.

MRS. OTHERLY. Good-afternoon, Mr. President. [*They all sit.*]

MRS. BLOW. And is there any startling news, Mr. President?

LINCOLN. Madam, every morning when I wake up, and say to myself, a hundred, or two hundred, or a thousand of my countrymen will be killed to-day, I find it startling.

MRS. BLOW. Oh, yes, of course, to be sure. But I mean, is there any good news?

LINCOLN. Yes. There is news of a victory. They lost twenty-seven hundred men — we lost eight hundred.

MRS. BLOW. How splendid!

LINCOLN. Thirty-five hundred.

MRS. BLOW. Oh, but you must n't talk like that, Mr. President. There were only eight hundred that mattered.

LINCOLN. The world is larger than your heart, madam.

MRS. BLOW. Now the dear President is becoming whimsical, Mrs. Lincoln.

SUSAN *brings in tea-tray, and hands tea round.* LINCOLN *takes none.* SUSAN *goes.*]

MRS. OTHERLY. Mr. President.

LINCOLN. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. OTHERLY. I don't like to impose upon your hospitality. I know how difficult everything is for you. But one has to take one's opportunities. May I ask you a question?

LINCOLN. Certainly, ma'am.

MRS. OTHERLY. Is n't it possible for you to stop this war? In the name of a suffering country, I ask you that.

MRS. BLOW. I'm sure such a question would never have entered my head.

LINCOLN. It is a perfectly right question. Ma'am, I have but one thought always — how can this thing be stopped? But we must ensure the integrity of the Union. In two years war has become an hourly bitterness to me. I believe I suffer no less than any man. But it must be endured. The cause was a right one two years ago. It is unchanged.

MRS. OTHERLY. I know you are noble and generous. But I believe that war must be wrong under any circumstances, for any cause.

MRS. BLOW. I'm afraid the President would have but little encouragement if he listened often to this kind of talk.

LINCOLN. I beg you not to harass yourself, madam. Ma'am, I too believe war to be wrong. It is the weakness and the jealousy and the folly of men that make a thing so wrong possible. But we are all weak, and jealous, and foolish. That's how the world is, ma'am, and we cannot outstrip the world. Some of the worst of us are sullen, aggressive still — just clumsy, greedy pirates. Some of us have grown out of that. But the best of us have an instinct to resist aggression if it won't listen to persuasion. You may say it's a wrong instinct. I don't know. But it's there, and it's there in millions of good men. I don't believe it's a wrong instinct. I believe that the world must come to wisdom slowly. It is for us who hate aggression to persuade men always and earnestly against it, and hope that, little by little, they will hear us. But in the mean time there will come moments when the aggressors will force the instinct to resistance to act. Then we must act earnestly, praying always in our courage that never again will this thing happen. And then we must turn again, and again, and again to persuasion. This appeal to force is the misdeed of an imperfect world. But we are imperfect. We must strive to purify the world, but we must not think ourselves pure above the world. When I had this thing to decide, it would have been easy to say, "No, I will have none of it; it is evil, and I will not touch it." But that would have decided nothing, and I saw what I believed to be the truth as I now put it to you, ma'am. It's a forlorn thing for any man to have this responsibility in his heart. I may see wrongly, but that's how I see.

MRS. BLOW. I quite agree with you, Mr. President. These brutes in the South must be taught, though I doubt whether you can teach them anything except by destroying them. That's what Goliath says.

LINCOLN. Goliath must be getting quite an old man.

MRS. BLOW. Indeed, he's not, Mr. President. Goliath is only thirty-eight.

LINCOLN. Really, now? Perhaps I might be able to get him a commission.

MRS. BLOW. Oh, no. Goliath could n't be spared. He's doing contracts for the government, you know. Goliath could n't possibly go. I'm sure he will be very pleased when I tell him what you say about these people who want to stop the war, Mr. President. I hope Mrs. Otherly is satisfied. Of course, we could all complain. We all have to make sacrifices, as I told Mrs. Otherly.

MRS. OTHERLY. Thank you, Mr. President, for what you've said. I must try to think about it. But I always believed war to be wrong. I did n't want my boy to go, because I believed it to be wrong. But he would. That came to me last week.

[*She hands a paper to* LINCOLN.]

LINCOLN [*looks at it, rises, and hands it back to her*]. Ma'am, there are times when no man may speak. I grieve for you, I grieve for you.

MRS. OTHERLY [*rising*]. I think I will go. You don't mind my saying what I did?

LINCOLN. We are all poor creatures, ma'am. Think kindly of me. [*He takes her hand.*] Mary.

[MRS. LINCOLN *goes out with* MRS. OTHERLY.]

MRS. BLOW. Of course it's very sad for her, poor woman. But she makes her trouble worse by these perverted views, does n't she? And, I hope you will show no signs of weakening, Mr. President, till it has been made impossible for those shameful rebels to hold up their heads again. Goliath says you ought to make a proclamation that no mercy will be shown to them afterwards. I'm sure I shall never speak to one of them again. [*Rising.*] Well, I must be going. I'll see Mrs. Lincoln as I go out. Good-afternoon, Mr. President.

[*She turns at the door, and offers* LINCOLN *her hand, which he does not take.*]

LINCOLN. Good-afternoon, madam. And I'd like to offer ye a word of advice. That poor mother told me what she thought. I don't agree with her, but I honour her. She's wrong, but she is noble. You've told me what you think. I don't agree with you, and I'm ashamed of you and your like. You, who have sacrificed nothing, babble about destroying the South while other people conquer it. I accepted this war with a sick heart, and I've a heart that's near to breaking every day. I accepted it in the name of humanity, and just and merciful dealing, and the hope of love and charity on earth. And you come to me, talking of revenge and destruction, and malice, and enduring hate. These gentle people are mistaken, but they are mistaken cleanly, and in a great name. It is you that dishonour the cause for which we stand — it is you who would make it a mean and little thing. Good-afternoon. [*He opens the door and* MRS. BLOW, *finding words inadequate, goes.* LINCOLN *moves across the room and rings a bell. After a moment,* SUSAN *comes in.*] Susan, if that lady comes here again she may meet with an accident.

SUSAN. Yes, sir. Is that all, sir?

LINCOLN. No, sir, it is not all, sir. I don't like this coat. I am going to change it. I shall be back in a minute or two, and if a gentleman named Mr. William Custis calls, ask him to wait in here.

[*He goes out.* SUSAN *collects the tea-cups. As she is going to the door, a quiet, grave white-haired negro appears facing her.* SUSAN *starts violently.*]

THE NEGRO [*he talks slowly and very quietly*]. It is all right.

SUSAN. And who in the name of night might you be?

THE NEGRO. Mista William Custis. Mr. Lincoln tell me to come here. Nobody stop me, so I come to look for him.

SUSAN. Are you Mr. William Custis?

CUSTIS. Yes.

SUSAN. Mr. Lincoln will be here directly. He's gone to change his coat. You'd better sit down.

CUSTIS. Yes. [*He does so, looking about him with a certain pathetic inquisitiveness.*] Mista Lincoln live here. You his servant? A very fine thing for young girl to be servant to Mista Lincoln.

SUSAN. Well, we get on very well together.

CUSTIS. A very bad thing to be slave in South.

SUSAN. Look here, you Mr. Custis, don't you go mixing me up with slaves.

CUSTIS. No, you not slave. You servant, but you free body. That very mighty thing. A poor servant, born free.

SUSAN. Yes, but look here, are you pitying me, with your poor servant?

CUSTIS. Pity? No. I think you very mighty.

SUSAN. Well, I don't know so much about mighty. But I expect you're right. It is n't every one that rises to the White House.

CUSTIS. It not every one that is free body. That is why you mighty.

SUSAN. I've never thought much about it.

CUSTIS. I think always about it.

SUSAN. I suppose you're free, are n't you?

CUSTIS. Yes. Not born free. I was beaten when I a little nigger. I saw my mother — I will not remember what I saw.

SUSAN. I'm sorry, Mr. Custis. That was wrong.

CUSTIS. Yes. Wrong.

SUSAN. Are all nig — I mean are all black gentlemen like you?

CUSTIS. No. I have advantages. They not many have advantages.

SUSAN. No, I suppose not. Here's Mr. Lincoln coming. [LINCOLN, *coated after his heart's desire, comes to the door.* CUSTIS *rises.*] This is the gentleman you said, sir.

[*She goes out with the tray.*]

LINCOLN. Mr. Custis, I'm very glad to see you.

[*He offers his hand.* CUSTIS *takes it, and is about to kiss it.* LINCOLN *stops him gently.*]

[*Sitting.*] Sit down, will you?

CUSTIS [*still standing, keeping his hat in his hand*]. It very kind of Mista Lincoln ask me to come to see him.

LINCOLN. I was afraid you might refuse.

CUSTIS. A little shy? Yes. But so much to ask. Glad to come.

LINCOLN. Please sit down.

CUSTIS. Polite?

LINCOLN. Please. I can't sit myself, you see, if you don't.

CUSTIS. Black, black. White, white.

LINCOLN. Nonsense. Just two old men, sitting together [CUSTIS *sits to* LINCOLN'S *gesture*] — and talking.

CUSTIS. I think I older man than Mista Lincoln.

LINCOLN. Yes, I expect you are. I'm fifty-four.

CUSTIS. I seventy-two.

LINCOLN. I hope I shall look as young when I'm seventy-two.

CUSTIS. Cold water. Much walk. Believe in Lord Jesus Christ. Have always little herbs learnt when a little nigger. Mista Lincoln try. Very good.

[*He hands a small twist of paper to* LINCOLN.]

LINCOLN. Now, that's uncommon kind of you. Thank you. I've heard much about your preaching, Mr. Custis.

CUSTIS. Yes.

LINCOLN. I should like to hear you.

CUSTIS. Mista Lincoln great friend of my people.

LINCOLN. I have come at length to a decision.

CUSTIS. A decision?

LINCOLN. Slavery is going. We have been resolved always to confine it. Now it shall be abolished.

CUSTIS. You sure?

LINCOLN. Sure.

[CUSTIS *slowly stands up, bows his head, and sits again.*]

CUSTIS. My people much to learn. Years, and years, and years. Ignorant, frightened, suspicious people. It will be difficult, very slow. [*With growing passion.*] But born free bodies. Free. I born slave, Mista Lincoln. No man understand who not born slave.

LINCOLN. Yes, yes. I understand.

CUSTIS [*with his normal regularity.*] I think so. Yes.

LINCOLN. I should like you to ask me any question you wish.

CUSTIS. I have some complaint. Perhaps I not understand.

LINCOLN. Tell me.

CUSTIS. Southern soldiers take some black men prisoner. Black men in your uniform. Take them prisoner. Then murder them.

LINCOLN. I know.

CUSTIS. What you do?

LINCOLN. We have sent a protest.

CUSTIS. No good. Must do more.

LINCOLN. What more can we do?

CUSTIS. You know.

LINCOLN. Yes; but don't ask me for reprisals.

CUSTIS [*gleaming*]. Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth.

LINCOLN. No. no. You must think. Think what you are saying.

CUSTIS. I think of murdered black men.

LINCOLN. You would not ask me to murder?

CUSTIS. Punish — not murder.

LINCOLN. Yes, murder. How can I kill men in cold blood for what has been done by others? Think what would follow. It is for us to set a great example, not to follow a wicked one. You do believe that, don't you?

CUSTIS [*after a pause*]. I know. Yes. Let your light so shine before men. I trust Mista Lincoln. Will trust. I was wrong. I was too sorry for my people.

LINCOLN. Will you remember this? For more than two years I have thought of you every day. I have grown a weary man with thinking. But I shall not forget. I promise that.

CUSTIS. You great, kind friend. I will love you. [*A knock at the door.*]

LINCOLN. Yes.

[SUSAN *comes in.*]

SUSAN. An officer gentleman. He says it's very important.

LINCOLN. I'll come. [*He and* CUSTIS *rise.*] Wait, will you, Mr. Custis? I want to ask you some questions.

[*He goes out. It is getting dark, and* SUSAN *lights a lamp and draws the curtains.* CUSTIS *stands by the door looking after* LINCOLN.]

CUSTIS. He very good man.

SUSAN. You've found that out, have you?

CUSTIS. Do you love him, you white girl?

SUSAN. Of course I do.

CUSTIS. Yes, you must.

SUSAN. He's a real white man. No offence, of course.

CUSTIS. Not offend. He talk to me as if black no difference.

SUSAN. But I tell you what, Mr. Custis. He'll kill himself over this war, his heart's that kind — like a shorn lamb, as they say.

CUSTIS. Very unhappy war.

SUSAN. But I suppose he's right. It's got to go on till it's settled.

[*In the street below a body of people is heard approaching, singing "John Brown's Body."* CUSTIS *and* SUSAN *stand listening,* SUSAN *joining in the song as it passes and fades away.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

FIRST CHRONICLER. Unchanged our time. And further yet
In loneliness must be the way,
And difficult and deep the debt
Of constancy to pay.

SECOND CHRONICLER. And one denies, and one forsakes.
And still unquestioning he goes,
Who has his lonely thoughts, and makes
A world of those.

[*The two together.*] When the high heart we magnify,
And the sure vision celebrate,
And worship greatness passing by,
Ourselves are great.

SCENE IV. *About the same date. A meeting of the Cabinet at Washington.* SMITH *has gone and* CAMERON *has been replaced by* EDWIN M. STANTON, *Secretary of War. Otherwise the ministry, completed by* SEWARD, CHASE, HOOK, BLAIR, *and* WELLES, *is as before. They are now arranging themselves at the table, leaving* LINCOLN'S *place empty.*

SEWARD [*coming in*]. I've just had my summons. Is there some special news?

STANTON. Yes. McClellan has defeated Lee at Antietam. It's our greatest success. They ought not to recover from it. The tide is turning.

BLAIR. Have you seen the President?

STANTON. I've just been with him.

WELLES. What does he say?

STANTON. He only said. "At last." He's coming directly.

HOOK. He will bring up his proclamation again. In my opinion it is inopportune.

SEWARD. Well, we've learnt by now that the President is the best man among us.

HOOK. There's a good deal of feeling against him everywhere, I find.

BLAIR. He's the one man with character enough for this business.

HOOK. There are other opinions.

SEWARD. Yes, but not here, surely.

HOOK. It's not for me to say. But I ask you, what does he mean about emancipation? I've always understood that it was the Union we were fighting for, and that abolition was to be kept in our minds for legislation at the right moment. And now one day he talks as though emancipation were his only concern, and the next as though he would throw up the whole idea, if by doing it he could secure peace with the establishment of the Union. Where are we?

SEWARD. No, you're wrong. It's the Union first now with him, but there's no question about his views on slavery. You know that perfectly well. But he has always kept his policy about slavery free in his mind, to be directed as he thought best for the sake of the Union. You remember his words: "If I could save the Union without freeing any slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union." Nothing could be plainer than that, just as nothing could be plainer than his determination to free the slaves when he can.

HOOK. Well, there are some who would have acted differently.

BLAIR. And you may depend upon it they would not have acted so wisely.

STANTON. I don't altogether agree with the President. But he's the only man I should agree with at all.

HOOK. To issue the proclamation now, and that's what he will propose, mark my words, will be to confuse the public mind just when we want to keep it clear.

WELLES. Are you sure he will propose to issue it now?

HOOK. You see if he does n't.

WELLES. If he does I shall support him.

SEWARD. Is Lee's army broken?

STANTON. Not yet — but it is in grave danger.

HOOK. Why does n't the President come? One would think this news was nothing.

CHASE. I must say I'm anxious to know what he has to say about it all.

[A CLERK *comes in.*]

CLERK. The President's compliments, and he will be here in a moment. [*He goes.*]

HOOK. I shall oppose it if it comes up.

CHASE. He may say nothing about it.

SEWARD. I think he will.

STANTON. Anyhow, it's the critical moment.

BLAIR. Here he comes.

[LINCOLN *comes in carrying a small book.*]

LINCOLN. Good-morning, gentlemen.

[*He takes his place.*]

THE MINISTERS. Good-morning, Mr. President.

SEWARD. Great news, we hear.

HOOK. If we leave things with the army to take their course for a little now, we ought to see through our difficulties.

LINCOLN. It's an exciting morning, gentlemen. I feel rather excited myself. I find my mind not at its best in excitement. Will you allow me? [*Opening his book.*] It may compose us all. It is Mr. Artemus Ward's latest.

[THE MINISTERS, *with the exception of* HOOK, *who makes no attempt to hide his irritation, and* STANTON, *who would do the same but for his disapproval of* HOOK, *listen with good-humoured patience and amusement while he reads the following passage from Artemus Ward.*]

"High Handed Outrage at Utica."

"In the Faul of 1856, I showed my show

in Utiky, a trooly grate city in the State of New York. The people gave me a cordyal recepshun. The press was loud in her praises. 1 day as I was givin a descripshun of my Beests and Snaiks in my usual flowry stile what was my skorn and disgust to see a big burly feller walk up to the cage containin my wax figgers of the Lord's last Supper, and cease Judas Iscarrot by the feet and drag him out on the ground. He then commenced fur to pound him as hard as he cood.

"'What under the son are you abowt,' cried I.

"Sez he, 'What did you bring this pussylanermus cuss here fur?' and he hit the wax figger another tremenjis blow on the hed.

"Sez I, 'You egrejus ass, that airs a wax figger — a representashun of the false 'Postle.'

"Sez he, 'That's all very well fur you to say; but I tell you, old man, that Judas Iscarrot can't show himself in Utiky with impunerty by a darn site,' with which observashun he kaved in Judassis hed. The young man belonged to 1 of the first famerlies in Utiky. I sood him, and the Joory brawt in a verdick of Arson in the 3d degree."

STANTON. May we now consider affairs of state?

HOOK. Yes, we may.

LINCOLN. Mr. Hook says, yes, we may.

STANTON. Thank you.

LINCOLN. Oh, no. Thank Mr. Hook.

SEWARD. McClellan is in pursuit of Lee, I suppose.

LINCOLN. You suppose a good deal. But for the first time McClellan has the chance of being in pursuit of Lee, and that's the first sign of their end. If McClellan does n't take his chance, we'll move Grant down to the job. That will mean delay, but no matter. The mastery has changed hands.

BLAIR. Grant drinks.

LINCOLN. Then tell me the name of his brand. I'll send some barrels to the others. He wins victories.

HOOK. Is there other business?

LINCOLN. There is. Some weeks ago I showed you a draft I made proclaiming freedom for all slaves.

HOOK [*aside to* WELLES]. I told you so.

LINCOLN. You thought then it was not the time to issue it. I agreed. I think the moment has come. May I read it to you again? "It is proclaimed that on the first day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free." That allows three months from to-day. There are clauses dealing with compensation in a separate draft.

HOOK. I must oppose the issue of such a proclamation at this moment in the most unqualified terms. This question should be left until our victory is complete. To thrust it forward now would be to invite dissension when we most need unity.

WELLES. I do not quite understand, Mr. President, why you think this the precise moment.

LINCOLN. Believe me, gentlemen, I have considered this matter with all the earnestness and understanding of which I am capable.

HOOK. But when the *New York Tribune* urged you to come forward with a clear declaration six months ago, you rebuked them.

LINCOLN. Because I thought the occasion not the right one. It was useless to issue a proclamation that might be as inoperative as the Pope's bull against the comet. My duty, it has seemed to me, has been to be loyal to a principle, and not to betray it by expressing it in action at the wrong time. That is what I conceive statesmanship to be. For long now I have had two fixed resolves. To preserve the Union, and to abolish slavery. How to preserve the Union I was always clear, and more than two years of bitterness have not dulled my vision. We have fought for the Union, and we are now winning for the Union. When and how to proclaim abolition I have all this time been uncertain. I am uncertain no longer. A few weeks ago I saw that, too, clearly. So soon, I said to myself, as the rebel army shall be driven out of Maryland, and it becomes plain to the world

that victory is assured to us in the end, the time will have come to announce that with that victory and a vindicated Union will come abolition. I made the promise to myself — and to my Maker. The rebel army is now driven out, and I am going to fulfil that promise. I do not wish your advice about the main matter, for that I have determined for myself. This I say without intending anything but respect for any one of you. But I beg you to stand with me in this thing.

HOOK. In my opinion, it's altogether too impetuous.

LINCOLN. One other observation I will make. I know very well that others might in this matter, as in others, do better than I can, and if I was satisfied that the public confidence was more fully possessed by any one of them than by me, and knew of any constitutional way in which he could be put in my place, he should have it. I would gladly yield it to him. But, though I cannot claim undivided confidence, I do not know that, all things considered, any other person has more; and, however this may be, there is no way in which I can have any other man put where I am. I am here; I must do the best I can, and bear the responsibility of taking the course which I feel I ought to take.

STANTON. Could this be left over a short time for consideration?

CHASE. I feel that we should remember that our only public cause at the moment is the preservation of the Union.

HOOK. I entirely agree.

LINCOLN. Gentlemen, we cannot escape history. We of this administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance or insignificance can spare one or another of us. In giving freedom to the slave we assure freedom to the free. We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last, best hope on earth. [*He places the proclamation in front of him.*] "Shall be thenceforward and forever free." Gentlemen, I pray for your support. [*He signs it.*]

[THE MINISTERS *rise.* SEWARD, WELLES, *and* BLAIR *shake* LINCOLN'S *hand and go out.* STANTON *and* CHASE *bow to him, and follow.* HOOK, *the last to rise, moves away, making no sign.*]

LINCOLN. Hook.

HOOK. Yes, Mr. President.

LINCOLN. Hook, one cannot help hearing things.

HOOK. I beg your pardon?

LINCOLN. Hook, there's a way some people have, when a man says a disagreeable thing, of asking him to repeat it, hoping to embarrass him. It's often effective. But I'm not easily embarrassed. I said one cannot help hearing things.

HOOK. And I do not understand what you mean, Mr. President.

LINCOLN. Come, Hook, we're alone. Lincoln is a good enough name. And I think you understand.

HOOK. How should I?

LINCOLN. Then, plainly, there are intrigues going on.

HOOK. Against the government?

LINCOLN. No. In it. Against me.

HOOK. Criticism, perhaps.

LINCOLN. To what end? To better my ways?

HOOK. I presume that might be the purpose.

LINCOLN. Then, why am I not told what it is?

HOOK. I imagine it's a natural compunction.

LINCOLN. Or ambition?

HOOK. What do you mean?

LINCOLN. You think you ought to be in my place.

HOOK. You are well informed.

LINCOLN. You cannot imagine why every one does not see that you ought to be in my place.

HOOK. By what right do you say that?

LINCOLN. Is it not true?

HOOK. You take me unprepared. You have me at a disadvantage.

LINCOLN. You speak as a very scrupulous man, Hook.

HOOK. Do you question my honour?

LINCOLN. As you will.

HOOK. Then I resign.

LINCOLN. As a protest against . . . ?

HOOK. Your suspicion.

LINCOLN. It is false?

HOOK. Very well, I will be frank. I mistrust your judgment.

LINCOLN. In what?

HOOK. Generally. You over-emphasise abolition.

LINCOLN. You don't mean that. You mean that you fear possible public feeling against abolition.

HOOK. It must be persuaded, not forced.

LINCOLN. All the most worthy elements in it are persuaded. But the ungenerous elements make the most noise, and you hear them only. You will run from the terrible name of Abolitionist even when it is pronounced by worthless creatures whom you know you have every reason to despise.

HOOK. You have, in my opinion, failed in necessary firmness in saying what will be the individual penalties of rebellion.

LINCOLN. This is a war. I will not allow it to become a blood-feud.

HOOK. We are fighting treason. We must meet it with severity.

LINCOLN. We will defeat treason. And I will meet it with conciliation.

HOOK. It is a policy of weakness.

LINCOLN. It is a policy of faith — it is a policy of compassion. [*Warmly.*] Hook, why do you plague me with these jealousies? Once before I found a member of my Cabinet working behind my back. But he was disinterested, and he made amends nobly. But, Hook, you have allowed the burden of these days to sour you. I know it all. I've watched you plotting and plotting for authority. And I, who am a lonely man, have been sick at heart. So great is the task God has given to my hand, and so few are my days, and my deepest hunger is always for loyalty in my own house. You have withheld it from me. You have done great service in your office, but you have grown envious. Now you resign, as you did once before when I came openly to you in friendship. And you think that again I shall flatter you and coax you to stay. I don't think I ought to do it. I will not do it. I must take you at your word.

HOOK. I am content. [*He turns to go.*]

LINCOLN. Will you shake hands?

HOOK. I beg you will excuse me.

[*He goes.* LINCOLN *stands silently for a moment, a travelled, lonely captain. He rings a bell, and a* CLERK *comes in.*]

LINCOLN. Ask Mr. Hay to come in.

CLERK. Yes, sir.

[*He goes.* LINCOLN, *from the folds of his pockets, produces another book, and holds it unopened.* HAY *comes in.*]

LINCOLN. I'm rather tired to-day, Hay. Read to me a little. [*He hands him the book.*] "The Tempest" — you know the passage.

HAY [*reading*]. Our revels now are ended; these our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air;
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

LINCOLN. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life . . .

THE CURTAIN FALLS

FIRST CHRONICLER. Two years again.
Desolation of battle, and long debate,
Counsels and prayers of men,
And bitterness of destruction and witless hate,
And the shame of lie contending with lie,
Are spending themselves, and the brain
That set its lonely chart four years gone by,
Knowing the word fulfilled,
Comes with charity and communion to bring
To reckoning,
To reconcile and build.

[*The two together.*] What victor coming from the field
Leaving the victim desolate,
But has a vulnerable shield
Against the substances of fate?

That battle's won that leads in chains
But retribution and despite,
And bids misfortune count her gains
Not stricken in a penal night.

His triumph is but bitterness
Who looks not to the starry doom
When proud and humble but possess
The little kingdom of the tomb.
Who, striking home, shall not forgive,
Strikes with a weak returning rod,
Claiming a fond prerogative
Against the armoury of God.

Who knows, and for his knowledge stands
Against the darkness in dispute,
And dedicates industrious hands,
And keeps a spirit resolute,
Prevailing in the battle, then
A steward of his word is made,
To bring it honour among men,
Or know his captaincy betrayed.

SCENE V. *An April evening in* 1865. *A farmhouse near Appomattox.* GENERAL GRANT, *Commander-in-Chief, under* LINCOLN, *of the Northern armies, is seated at a table with* CAPTAIN MALINS, *an aide-de-camp. He is smoking a cigar, and at intervals he replenishes his glass of whiskey.* DENNIS, *an orderly, sits at a table in the corner, writing.*

GRANT [*consulting a large watch lying in front of him*]. An hour and a half. There ought to be something more from Meade by now. Dennis.

DENNIS [*coming to the table*]. Yes, sir.

GRANT. Take these papers to Captain Templeman, and ask Colonel West if the Twenty-Third are in action yet. Tell the cook to send some soup at ten o'clock. Say it was cold yesterday.

DENNIS. Yes, sir. [*He goes.*]

GRANT. Give me that map, Malins.

[MALINS *hands him the map at which he is working.*]

[*After studying it in silence.*] Yes. There's no doubt about it. Unless Meade goes to sleep it can only be a question of hours. Lee's a great man, but he can't get out of that.

[*Making a ring on the map with his finger*].

MALINS [*taking the map again*]. This ought to be the end, sir.

GRANT. Yes. If Lee surrenders, we can all pack up for home.

MALINS. By God, sir, it will be splendid, won't it, to be back again?

GRANT. By God, sir, it will.

MALINS. I beg your pardon, sir.

GRANT. You're quite right, Malins. My boy goes away to school next week. Now I may be able to go down with him and see him settled.

[DENNIS *comes back.*]

DENNIS. Colonel West says, yes, sir, for the last half-hour. The cook says he's sorry, sir. It was a mistake.

GRANT. Tell him to keep his mistakes in the kitchen.

DENNIS. I will, sir.

[*He goes back to his place.*]

GRANT [*at his papers*]. Those rifles went up this afternoon?

MALINS. Yes, sir.

[*Another* ORDERLY *comes in.*]

ORDERLY. Mr. Lincoln has just arrived, sir. He's in the yard now.

GRANT. All right, I'll come. [THE ORDERLY *goes.* GRANT *rises and crosses to the door, but is met there by* LINCOLN *and* HAY. LINCOLN, *in top boots and tall hat that has seen many campaigns, shakes hands with* GRANT *and takes* MALINS'S *salute.*] I was n't expecting you, sir.

LINCOLN. No; but I could n't keep away. How's it going? [*They sit.*]

GRANT. Meade sent word an hour and a half ago that Lee was surrounded all but two miles, which was closing in.

LINCOLN. That ought about to settle it, eh?

GRANT. Unless anything goes wrong in those two miles, sir. I'm expecting a further report from Meade every minute.

LINCOLN. Would there be more fighting?

GRANT. It will probably mean fighting through the night, more or less. But Lee must realise it's hopeless by the morning.

AN ORDERLY [*entering*]. A despatch, sir.

GRANT. Yes.

[THE ORDERLY *goes, and a* YOUNG

Officer comes in from the field. He salutes and hands a despatch to Grant.]

Officer. From General Meade, sir.

Grant [*taking it*]. Thank you. [*He opens it and reads.*] You need n't wait. [The Officer *salutes and goes.*] Yes, they've closed the ring. Meade gives them ten hours. It 's timed at eight. That's six o'clock in the morning.

[*He hands the despatch to* Lincoln.]

Lincoln. We must be merciful. Bob Lee has been a gallant fellow.

Grant [*taking a paper*]. Perhaps you'll look through this list, sir. I hope it's the last we shall have.

Lincoln [*taking the paper*]. It's a horrible part of the business, Grant. Any shootings?

Grant. One.

Lincoln. Damn it, Grant, why can't you do without it? No, no, of course not! Who is it?

Grant. Malins.

Malins [*opening a book*]. William Scott, sir. It's rather a hard case.

Lincoln. What is it?

Malins. He had just done a heavy march, sir, and volunteered for double guard duty to relieve a sick friend. He was found asleep at his post.

[*He shuts the book.*]

Grant. I was anxious to spare him. But it could n't be done. It was a critical place, at a gravely critical time.

Lincoln. When is it to be?

Malins. To-morrow, at daybreak, sir.

Lincoln. I don't see that it will do him any good to be shot. Where is he?

Malins. Here, sir.

Lincoln. Can I go and see him?

Grant. Where is he?

Malins. In the barn, I believe, sir.

Grant. Dennis.

Dennis [*coming from his table*]. Yes, sir.

Grant. Ask them to bring Scott in here. [Dennis *goes.*] I want to see Colonel West. Malins, ask Templeman if those figures are ready yet.

[*He goes, and* Malins *follows.*]

Lincoln. Will you, Hay?

[Hay *goes. After a moment, during which* Lincoln *takes the book that* Malins *has been reading from, and looks into it,* William Scott *is brought in under guard. He is a boy of twenty.*]

Lincoln [*to the* Guard]. Thank you. Wait outside, will you? [*The* Men *salute and withdraw.*] Are you William Scott?

Scott. Yes, sir.

Lincoln. You know who I am?

Scott. Yes, sir.

Lincoln. The General tells me you've been court-martialled.

Scott. Yes, sir.

Lincoln. Asleep on guard?

Scott. Yes, sir.

Lincoln. It 's a very serious offence.

Scott. I know, sir.

Lincoln. What was it?

Scott [*a pause*]. I could n't keep awake, sir.

Lincoln. You'd had a long march?

Scott. Twenty-three miles, sir.

Lincoln. You were doing double guard?

Scott. Yes, sir.

Lincoln. Who ordered you?

Scott. Well, sir, I offered.

Lincoln. Why?

Scott. Enoch White — he was sick, sir. We come from the same place.

Lincoln. Where's that?

Scott. Vermont, sir.

Lincoln. You live there?

Scott. Yes, sir. My . . . we've got a farm down there, sir.

Lincoln. Who has?

Scott. My mother, sir. I've got her photograph, sir.

[*He takes it from his pocket.*]

Lincoln [*taking it*]. Does she know about this?

Scott. For God's sake, don't, sir!

Lincoln. There, there, my boy. You're not going to be shot.

Scott [*after a pause*]. Not going to be shot, sir!

Lincoln. No, no.

Scott. Not — going — to — be — shot!

[*He breaks down, sobbing.*]

Lincoln [*rising and going to him*]. There, there. I believe you when you tell me that you could n't keep awake. I'm going to

trust you, and send you back to your regiment. [*He goes back to his seat.*]

SCOTT. When may I go back, sir?

LINCOLN. You can go back to-morrow. I expect the fighting will be over, though.

SCOTT. Is it over yet, sir?

LINCOLN. Not quite.

SCOTT. Please, sir, let me go back to-night — let me go back to-night.

LINCOLN. Very well. [*He writes.*] Do you know where General Meade is?

SCOTT. No, sir.

LINCOLN. Ask one of those men to come here. [SCOTT *calls one of his guards in.*]

LINCOLN. Your prisoner is discharged. Take him at once to General Meade with this. [*He hands a note to the man.*]

THE SOLDIER. Yes, sir.

SCOTT. Thank you, sir.

[*He salutes and goes out with the* SOLDIER.]

LINCOLN. Hay.

HAY [*outside*]. Yes, sir. [*He comes in.*]

LINCOLN. What's the time?

HAY [*looking at the watch on the table*]. Just on half-past nine, sir.

LINCOLN. I shall sleep here for a little. You'd better shake down too. They'll wake us if there's any news.

[LINCOLN *wraps himself up on two chairs.* HAY *follows suit on a bench. After a few moments* GRANT *comes to the door, sees what has happened, blows out the candles quietly, and goes away.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE FIRST CHRONICLER. Under the stars
an end is made,
And on the field the Southern blade
Lies broken,
And, where strife was, shall union be,
And, where was bondage, liberty.
The word is spoken. . . .
Night passes.

[*The Curtain rises on the same scene,* LINCOLN *and* HAY *still lying asleep. The light of dawn fills the room The* ORDERLY *comes in with two smoking cups of coffee and some biscuits.* LINCOLN *wakes.*]

LINCOLN. Good-morning.

ORDERLY. Good-morning, sir.

LINCOLN [*taking coffee and biscuits*]. Thank you.

[*The* ORDERLY *turns to* HAY, *who sleeps on, and he hesitates.*]

LINCOLN. Hay. [*Shouting.*] Hay.

HAY [*starting up*]. Hullo! What the devil is it? I beg your pardon, sir.

LINCOLN. Not at all. Take a little coffee.

HAY. Thank you, sir.

[*He takes coffee and biscuits. The* ORDERLY *goes.*]

LINCOLN. Slept well, Hay?

HAY. I feel a little crumpled, sir. I think I fell off once.

LINCOLN. What's the time?

HAY [*looking at the watch*]. Six o'clock, sir.

[GRANT *comes in.*]

GRANT. Good-morning, sir; good-morning, Hay.

LINCOLN. Good-morning, general.

HAY. Good-morning, sir.

GRANT. I did n't disturb you last night. A message has just come from Meade. Lee asked for an armistice at four o'clock.

LINCOLN [*after a silence*]. For four years life has been but the hope of this moment. It is strange how simple it is when it comes. Grant, you've served the country very truly. And you've made my work possible. [*He takes his hand.*] Thank you.

GRANT. Had I failed, the fault would not have been yours, sir. I succeeded because you believed in me.

LINCOLN. Where is Lee?

GRANT. He's coming here. Meade should arrive directly.

LINCOLN. Where will Lee wait?

GRANT. There's a room ready for him. Will you receive him, sir?

LINCOLN. No, no, Grant. That's your affair. You are to mention no political matters. Be generous. But I need n't say that.

GRANT [*taking a paper from his pocket*]. Those are the terms I suggest.

LINCOLN [*reading*]. Yes, yes. They do you honour.

[*He places the paper on the table.*]

[*An* ORDERLY *comes in.*]

ORDERLY. General Meade is here, sir.

GRANT. Ask him to come here.

ORDERLY. Yes, sir. [*He goes.*]

GRANT. I learnt a good deal from Robert Lee in early days. He's a better man than most of us. This business will go pretty near the heart, sir.

LINCOLN. I'm glad it's to be done by a brave gentleman, Grant. [GENERAL MEADE *and* CAPTAIN SONE, *his aide-de-camp, come in.* MEADE *salutes.*] Congratulations, Meade. You've done well.

MEADE. Thank you, sir.

GRANT. Was there much more fighting?

MEADE. Pretty hot for an hour or two.

GRANT. How long will Lee be?

MEADE. Only a few minutes, I should say, sir.

GRANT. You said nothing about terms?

MEADE. No, sir.

LINCOLN. Did a boy Scott come to you?

MEADE. Yes, sir. He went into action at once. He was killed, was n't he, Sone?

SONE. Yes, sir.

LINCOLN. Killed? It's a queer world, Grant.

MEADE. Is there any proclamation to be made, sir, about the rebels?

GRANT. I —

LINCOLN. No, no. I'll have nothing of hanging or shooting these men, even the worst of them. Frighten them out of the country, open the gates, let down the bars, scare them off. Shoo! [*He flings out his arms.*] Good-bye, Grant. Report at Washington as soon as you can. [*He shakes hands with him.*] Good-bye, gentlemen. Come along, Hay.

[MEADE *salutes and* LINCOLN *goes, followed by* HAY.]

GRANT. Who is with Lee?

MEADE. Only one of his staff, sir.

GRANT. You might see Malins, will you, Sone, and let us know directly General Lee comes.

SONE. Yes, sir. [*He goes out.*]

GRANT. Well, Meade, it's been a big job.

MEADE. Yes, sir.

GRANT. We've had courage and determination. And we've had wits, to beat a great soldier. I'd say that to any man. But it's Abraham Lincoln, Meade, who has kept us a great cause clean to fight for. It does a man's heart good to know he's given victory to such a man to handle. A glass, Meade? [*Pouring out whiskey.*] No? [*Drinking.*] Do you know, Meade, there were fools who wanted me to oppose Lincoln for the next Presidency. I've got my vanities, but I know better than that.

[MALINS *comes in.*]

MALINS. General Lee is here, sir.

GRANT. Meade, will General Lee do me the honour of meeting me here? [MEADE *salutes and goes.*] Where the deuce is my hat, Malins? And sword.

MALINS. Here, sir.

[MALINS *gets them for him.*]

[MEADE *and* SONE *come in, and stand at the door at attention.* ROBERT LEE, *General-in-Chief of the Confederate forces, comes in, followed by one of his staff. The days of critical anxiety through which he has just lived have marked themselves on* LEE'S *face, but his groomed and punctilious toilet contrasts pointedly with* GRANT'S *unconsidered appearance. The two commanders face each other.* GRANT *salutes, and* LEE *replies.*]

GRANT. Sir, you have given me occasion to be proud of my opponent.

LEE. I have not spared my strength. I acknowledge its defeat.

GRANT. You have come —

LEE. To ask upon what terms you will accept surrender. Yes.

GRANT [*taking the paper from the table and handing it to* LEE]. They are simple. I hope you will not find them ungenerous.

LEE [*having read the terms*]. You are magnanimous, sir. May I make one submission?

GRANT. It would be a privilege if I could consider it.

LEE. You allow our officers to keep their horses. That is gracious. Our cavalry troopers' horses also are their own.

GRANT. I understand. They will be needed on the farms. It shall be done.

LEE. I thank you. It will do much

towards conciliating our people. I accept your terms.

[LEE *unbuckles his sword and offers it to* GRANT.]

GRANT. No, no. I should have included that. It has but one rightful place. I beg you.

[LEE *replaces his sword.* GRANT *offers his hand and* LEE *takes it. They salute, and* LEE *turns to go.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE TWO CHRONICLERS. A wind blows in the night,
And the pride of the rose is gone.
It laboured, and was delight,
And rains fell, and shone
Suns of the summer days,
And dews washed the bud,
And thanksgiving and praise
Was the rose in our blood.

And out of the night it came,
A wind, and the rose fell,
Shattered its heart of flame,
And how shall June tell
The glory that went with May?
How shall the full year keep
The beauty that ere its day
Was blasted into sleep?

Roses. Oh, heart of man:
Courage, that in the prime
Looked on truth, and began
Conspiracies with time
To flower upon the pain
Of dark and envious earth. . . .
A wind blows, and the brain
Is the dust that was its birth.

What shall the witness cry,
He who has seen alone
With imagination's eye
The darkness overthrown?
Hark: from the long eclipse
The wise words come —
A wind blows, and the lips
Of prophecy are dumb.

SCENE VI. *The evening of April* 14, 1865. *The small lounge of a theatre. On the far side are the doors of three private boxes. There is silence for a few moments. Then the sound of applause comes from the auditorium beyond. The box doors are opened. In the centre box can be seen* LINCOLN *and* STANTON, MRS. LINCOLN, *another lady, and an officer, talking together. The occupants come out from the other boxes into the lounge, where small knots of people have gathered from different directions, and stand or sit talking busily.*

A LADY. Very amusing, don't you think?

HER COMPANION. Oh, yes. But it's hardly true to life, is it?

ANOTHER LADY. Is n't that dark girl clever? What's her name?

A GENTLEMAN [*consulting his programme*]. Eleanor Crowne.

ANOTHER GENTLEMAN. There's a terrible draught, is n't there? I shall have a stiff neck.

HIS WIFE. You should keep your scarf on.

THE GENTLEMAN. It looks so odd.

ANOTHER LADY. The President looks very happy this evening, does n't he?

ANOTHER. No wonder, is it? He must be a proud man.

[*A young man, dressed in black, passes among the people, glancing furtively into* LINCOLN'S *box, and disappears. It is* JOHN WILKES BOOTH.]

A LADY [*greeting another*]. Ah, Mrs. Bennington. When do you expect your husband back?

[*They drift away.* SUSAN, *carrying cloaks and wraps, comes in. She goes to the box, and speaks to* MRS. LINCOLN. *Then she comes away, and sits down apart from the crowd to wait.*]

A YOUNG MAN. I rather think of going on the stage myself. My friends tell me I'm uncommon good. Only I don't think my health would stand it.

A GIRL. Oh, it must be a very easy life. Just acting — that's easy enough.

[*A cry of "*Lincoln*" comes through the auditorium. It is taken up, with shouts of "*The President,*" "*Speech,*" "*Abraham Lincoln,*" "*Father Abraham,*" and so on. The conversation in the lounge stops as the talkers turn to listen.*

After a few moments, LINCOLN *is seen to rise. There is a burst of cheering. The people in the lounge stand round the box door.* LINCOLN *holds up his hand, and there is a sudden silence.*]

LINCOLN. My friends, I am touched, deeply touched, by this mark of your goodwill. After four dark and difficult years, we have achieved the great purpose for which we set out. General Lee's surrender to General Grant leaves but one Confederate force in the field, and the end is immediate and certain. [*Cheers.*] I have but little to say at this moment. I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. But as events have come before me, I have seen them always with one faith. We have preserved the American Union, and we have abolished a great wrong. [*Cheers.*] The task of reconciliation, of setting order where there is now confusion, of bringing about a settlement at once just and merciful, and of directing the life of a reunited country into prosperous channels of goodwill and generosity, will demand all our wisdom, all our loyalty. It is the proudest hope of my life that I may be of some service in this work. [*Cheers.*] Whatever it may be, it can be but little in return for all the kindness and forbearance that I have received. With malice toward none, with charity for all, it is for us to resolve that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

[*There is a great sound of cheering. It dies down, and a boy passes through the lounge and calls out "Last act, ladies and gentlemen." The people disperse, and the box doors are closed.* SUSAN *is left alone and there is silence.*]

[*After a few moments,* BOOTH *appears. He watches* SUSAN *and sees that her gaze is fixed away from him. He creeps along to the centre box and disengages a hand from under his cloak. It holds a revolver. Poising himself, he opens the door with a swift movement, fires, flings the door to again, and rushes away. The door is thrown open again, and the* OFFICER *follows in pursuit. Inside the box,* MRS. LINCOLN *is kneeling by her husband, who is supported by* STANTON. A DOCTOR *runs across the lounge and goes into the box. There is complete silence in the theatre. The door closes again.*

SUSAN [*who has run to the box door, and is kneeling there, sobbing*]. Master, master! No, no, not my master!

[*The other box doors have opened, and the occupants with others have collected in little terror-struck groups in the lounge. Then the centre door opens, and* STANTON *comes out, closing it behind him.*]

STANTON. Now he belongs to the ages.

[THE CHRONICLERS *speak.*]

FIRST CHRONICLER. Events go by. And upon circumstance
Disaster strikes with the blind sweep of chance,
And this our mimic action was a theme,
Kinsmen, as life is, clouded as a dream.

SECOND CHRONICLER. But, as we spoke, presiding everywhere
Upon event was one man's character.
And that endures; it is the token sent
Always to man for man's own government.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

MIXED MARRIAGE

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

By St. JOHN G. ERVINE

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TO
NORA

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

John Rainey
Mrs. Rainey
Tom Rainey
Hugh Rainey
Nora Murray
Michael O'Hara

MIXED MARRIAGE

ACT I

SCENE. *It is the evening of a warm summer day at the beginning of July. The living room of* JOHN RAINEY'S *house, by reason of the coal-fire burning in the open grate, is intolerably heated; to counteract this, the door leading to the street is partly open, and the scullery door, leading to the yard is open to its widest. Near the fireplace, above which is suspended a portrait of King William the Third in the act of crossing the Boyne, a plain deal table, covered with dark-coloured American cloth, stands. It is laid for the evening meal. At the fire, placing a plateful of buttered toast on the fender, is* MRS. RAINEY, *a slight, gentle woman, patient with the awful patience of a woman who has always submitted to her husband's will, without ever respecting him. Whilst she is completing the preparations for the meal, the street door is pushed hurriedly open and* JOHN RAINEY, *dirty from his labor, enters. He is grey-haired, but not bald; he speaks with the quick accent of one used to being obeyed.*

RAINEY. Is the tay ready?

MRS. RAINEY. It'll be ready in a minute! Ye'll have to wait til Tom an' Hughie come in.

RAINEY. What are they not here fur? They have n't anny fardher nor me to come, an A'm here afore them. An' me an ould man an' all.

MRS. RAINEY. Ah, now don't be puttin' yerself out. Sure, they'll be here in a minute or two. Gwon into the scullery now an' wash yerself.

RAINEY. Has the wee boy wi' the *Telly-graph* come yit?

MRS. RAINEY. He'll be here in a minit. Lord bless us, ye're in a quare hurry the night.

RAINEY. He's always late, that wee lad!

MRS. RAINEY. Wus there annythin' pertickler ye wur wantin' t' see in it?

RAINEY. Aye, about the strack.

MRS. RAINEY. The strack! Ye're not out on strack, John?

RAINEY. Aye, we come out this avenin'.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, God help us, this is tarrible!

RAINEY. It's goan t' be a long job too, A can tell ye. The masters an' the men are determined.

MRS. RAINEY. Ye nivir tould me there was goan t' be a strack.

RAINEY. Och, what wud a lock o' weemen want t' be talkin' about stracks fur. What do they know about it?

MRS. RAINEY. It's on'y us that does know about it. It's us that has t' kape the heart in you while it's on.

RAINEY. Aw, now, hould yer tongue! You weemen are always down in the mouth about somethin'. Ye wud think t' hear ye talkin' we come out on strack fur the fun o' the thing. It's no joke, A can tell ye!

MRS. RAINEY. It is not, indeed.

RAINEY [*taking off his coat and loosening his waistcoat*]. Where's the towel?

MRS. RAINEY. Behin' the scullery door.

[*He goes into the scullery, and the noise of great splashing is heard whilst he washes himself. A newspaper boy is heard coming down the street, crying, "Telly-ger-ah!" He flings a paper into the little porch, utters his cry in the door, and passes on.* MRS. RAINEY *goes to the door and picks the paper up. As she does so, her son,* TOM, *appears in the doorway. They enter the kitchen together.*]

TOM. Is that you, Ma?

MRS. RAINEY. Aye, Tom! Where's Hughie?

TOM. Och, he's away after them Sinn

Feiners. He'll be here in a wee while. Is me da in yet?

[JOHN RAINEY *appears, towelling himself vigorously.*]

RAINEY. So ye're here at last, are ye? Kapin' the tay waitin'!

TOM. Och, sure, A cudden help it. A wus wi' Hughie!

RAINEY. Aye, ye're sure t' be late if ye're wi' him. Where's he?

TOM. A left him in Royal Avenue talkin' to Michael O'Hara.

RAINEY. What, thon Papish fella?

TOM. Aye, they went intil the Sinn Feiners' Hall thegither. [*He sits down and takes off his boots.*] He'll not be long.

[*He takes off his coat and loosens his waistcoat.*]

RAINEY. A don't like Hughie goin' after Papishes. He knows a quare lock o' them.

MRS. RAINEY. Och, now, what harm is there in that. A'm sure Micky O'Hara's as nice a wee fella as ye cud wish t' meet.

RAINEY. Aw, A've nathin' agenst him, but A don't like Cathliks an' Prodesans mixin' thegither. No good ivir comes o' the like o' that.

[TOM *goes into the scullery where the splashing noise is renewed.*]

MRS. RAINEY. They'll have to mix in heaven, John.

RAINEY. This is n't heaven.

MRS. RAINEY. Indeed, that's true. What wi' stracks an' one thing an' another, it might be hell.

RAINEY. There's no peace where Cathliks an' Prodesans gits mixed up thegither. Luk at the way the Cathliks carry on on the Twelfth o' July. Ye have t' have the peelers houlin' them back for fear they'd make a riot. D' ye call that respectable or dacent?

MRS. RAINEY. Well, God knows, they git plenty of provokin'. What wi' them men that prache at the Custom House Steps an' yer or'nge arches an' the way the *Tellygraph* is always goin' on at them, A wonder they don't do more nor they do.

RAINEY. Aw, ye wur always one fur Cathliks!

MRS. RAINEY. A belave in lavin' people alone. Come on, an' have yer tay fur dear sake. Sure ye'd go on talkin' fur a lifetime if A wus to let ye.

RAINEY. Are ye not goin' to wait fur Hughie?

MRS. RAINEY. No, ye'd better have yours now: he'll have his when he comes in. [*They sit down and begin the meal.*]

RAINEY. Dear on'y knows when that'll be, runnin' after a lock o' Socialists an' Cathliks?

MRS. RAINEY. He's not runnin' after Socialists. It's Sinn Feiners he's runnin' after.

RAINEY. They're the same thing. Sinn Feiners are all Socialists. That fella Michael O'Hara, what d' ye think he said when A asked him what way o' thinkin' he was?

MRS. RAINEY. A don't know, A'm sure.

RAINEY. A'm a member o' the Independent Labor Party, ses he, the I.L.P. A Socialist Society — that's what it is. Did ye ivir hear the like o' that?

MRS. RAINEY. Och, A've heerd worse. A've heerd o' stracks.

RAINEY. There ye go again. What can we do? Sure, the masters is not payin' us fair, an' there's no other way o' makin' them.

[TOM *re-enters the kitchen and completes his toilet in front of the small looking-glass hanging on the wall.*]

Is there, Tom?

TOM. Sure, I don't know anythin' about it.

RAINEY. Naw, ye're ignorant, that's what ye are. A great big fella like you, an' don't know that yit. Ye think o' nathin but goin' up the road of an avenin' after a lot o' girls.

MRS. RAINEY. Well, sure ye wur the same yerself when ye wur his age. Come on an' have yer tay, Tom.

RAINEY. The young men o' this day don't think enough. There's not one o' them knows a thing about the battle o' the Boyne. What happened on the first day o' July in the year sixteen hunderd and ninety, will ye tell me that, now?

[TOM *sits at the table.*]

TOM. Aw, fur dear sake, hould yer tongue. A left school long ago.

MRS. RAINEY. Mebbe some ould men lost their tempers.

RAINEY. Aye, ye can make fun, but it was the gran' day fur Englan' an' Irelan' that wus, when William o' Or'nge driv Popery out o' Irelan'.

TOM. He didden drive it far. Sure, there's plenty o' Papishes in Bilfast, an' there's more o' them in Irelan' nor Prodesans.

MRS. RAINEY. A can't help thinkin' it's their country we've got.

RAINEY. Their country, indeed! What d' ye think 'ud become o' us if this wur their country? There is n't a Prodesan in Irelan' wud be left alive.

MRS. RAINEY. Och, now, don't tell us the like o' that, fur sure it's not true. Cathliks is jus' like wurselves, as good as we are an' as bad as we are, an' no worse. A wish to me goodness ye wudden go to the Custom House Steps if that's the soart o' nonsense they tache ye.

RAINEY. A don't nade t' be taught it — A know it. A've read a bit in me time. Did ye ivir read the history o' Maria Monk?

TOM. Sure, Hughie ses that's all lies.

RAINEY. Lies, does he call it? What does he know about it? That's what comes thrum associatin' wi' Tagues. He'll be disbelievin' the Bible nixt.

[*A knock is heard on the door, and a voice cries "Are ye in, Mrs. Rainey?"*]

MRS. RAINEY. Aye, A am.

[*Enter* NORA MURRAY, *a good-looking, intelligent, dark-haired girl of twenty-four.*]

Och, is that yerself, Nora? Sure come on in.

NORA. Good avenin', Mr. Rainey.

RAINEY. Good avenin'.

NORA. How ir ye, Tom?

TOM. A'm bravely, thank ye, Nora.

NORA. Is Hugh in?

MRS. RAINEY. He's not home yet, but he'll be here in a wee minute. Have ye had yer tay?

NORA. Aye, A have, thank ye.

MRS. RAINEY. Sure, ye cud take a wee drap more, cudden ye?

NORA. Aw, no, thank ye. A'm on'y after havin' it.

TOM. Gwon an' have a drap 'er that.

NORA. Och, A cud not indeed.

RAINEY. There's no good askin' her if she won't have it.

NORA. Is it true about the strack?

RAINEY. It is.

NORA. Dear-a-dear, but it's a quare pity.

RAINEY. Aw, you weemen are all the same. Ye're always lukkin' on the black side o' things, an' complainin'.

MRS. RAINEY. There's nathin' but black sides to stracks.

TOM. Aw, there's a bright side, too. Ye don't have to git up so early in the mornin'.

RAINEY. Ye'll git up at the same time the morra mornin', strack or no strack. It wudden take you long t' git out o' the habit o' gettin' up early.

NORA. There'll be the quare distress in Belfast. It wus awful the last time.

RAINEY. There's always distress fur the like o' us sometime or other.

NORA. Indeed, that's true.

MRS. RAINEY. There ought to be some other way o' settlin' these things nor stracks. It's wicked, that's what it is, an' it's the weemen that has to bear the worst o' it. Aw, yes, indeed it is. You men don't have to face the rent agent an' the grocer wi' no money.

RAINEY. We all have to take our share, don't we?

MRS. RAINEY. Some have to take more nor their share. [*To* NORA.] Are ye goan up the road wi' Hughie the night, Nora?

NORA [*somewhat embarrassed*]. No, A jus' come in t' ask him about the strack.

RAINEY. Well ye've heerd about it.

NORA [*in greater confusion*]. Yes, A'll jus' be goin' now.

MRS. RAINEY. Fur dear sake, don't take any notis o' him. Sure, he's not beside himself the night. Jus' sit down there, an' wait till Hughie comes. He's a long time. [*She goes to the door and looks out.*] He's not in sight. Come on an' we'll walk til the head o' the street an' see if he's comin'.

NORA. Aye, A will.

[NORA *and* MRS. RAINEY *go out at the street door.*]

RAINEY. Is Hughie goin' out wi' that girl?

TOM. Aw, he walks up the road wi' her but sure he' done that often enough wi' other girls. He's a great boy fur girls.

RAINEY. What religion is she?

TOM [*uneasily*]. A'm not sure.

RAINEY. She's got a Papish name. There's many a Fenian be the name o' Murray.

TOM. Sure, what differs does it make if she is a Cathlik. She's a brave, nice wee girl.

RAINEY. A wudden have a son o' mine marry a Cathlik fur all the wurl'. A've nathin' agin the girl, but A believe in stickin' t' yer religion. A Cathlik's a Cathlik, an' a Prodesan's a Prodesan. Ye can't get over that.

TOM. Och, sure, they're all the same. Ye cudden tell the differs atween a Cathlik an' a Prodesan if ye met them in the street an' didden know what their religion wus. A'm not one fur marryin' out o' my religion meself, but A'm no bigot. Nora Murray's a fine wumman.

RAINEY. Fine or no fine, she's a Cathlik, an' A'll nivir consent til a son o' mine marryin' her.

TOM. What are ye goan t' do about the strack?

RAINEY. Do! What shud A do? Take me share in it the same's the rest o' ye? The workin' class has got t' hing thegither.

TOM. It's a tarrible pity we can't get our work done dacently. Nathin' but a lot o' fightin' an' wranglin'.

RAINEY. Ay, it's a rotten way t' git through the wurl', fightin' over ha'pennies. Us wantin' a penny an hour more, an' the masters not willin' t' give it to us. Och, ay, it's wrong. Wrong, wrong!

[*Re-enter* MRS. RAINEY.]

MRS. RAINEY. Hughie's comin' down the street, now. He's got O'Hara wi' him.

RAINEY. Huh! more Cathliks! Where's that girl gone?

MRS. RAINEY. A toul' her t' go on an' meet them. She'll come in wi' them in a minit.

RAINEY. A'm surprised at ye encouragin' her. A Cathlik!

MRS. RAINEY. Ah, fur dear sake, houl' yer wheesht. Ye've got Cathlik on the brain.

RAINEY. A'm agin mixed marriages, d' ye hear?

[*Enter* HUGH RAINEY, MICHAEL O'HARA, *and* NORA. *Greetings, surly on the part of old* RAINEY.]

MRS. RAINEY. Have ye had yer tay, Michael?

HUGH. No, indeed, he has n't, ma, an' A brought him here t' have it.

MICHAEL. Och, now, Mrs. Rainey, don't put yerself til any bother. Sure, A'll git it whin A go home.

MRS. RAINEY. It's no bother at all, Michael. It 's on'y t' git down a cup an' sasser. Sure, there's plenty, an' yer welcome to it.

MICHAEL. It's very kind o' ye, A'm sure.

[HUGH *and he sit down at the table together.* NORA *and* TOM *sit talking together on the sofa.* RAINEY *is seated before the fire reading the "Evening Telegraph."*]

MRS. RAINEY. Nora, come up here an' have a cup o' tay.

NORA. Aw, indeed A cuddent, Mrs. Rainey, thank ye. A've just had it.

HUGH. Ah, come on, an' keep Michael an' me company. Sure, ye can always drink tay.

MRS. RAINEY. Now, come on. We'll not take "no" fur an answer.

RAINEY. Sure if the girl dussen want it . . .

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, you go on readin' yer paper.

[NORA *joins* HUGH *and* MICHAEL *at the table.*]

HUGH. Da, we wur wantin' t' have a bit o' a talk wi' ye, Michael an' me, about the strack.

RAINEY. Wur ye?

HUGH. Aye, we wur. We wur thinkin' ye might give us a great dale o' help.

MICHAEL. Ye see, Mr. Rainey, ye're a man that's held in great respect be the men, Cathliks an' Prodesans.

RAINEY. A've always tried t' live a straight life an' do me duty by my fellow men.

MICHAEL. Indeed, A know that quare an' well, Mr. Rainey. Ye're a man that's alwis bin thought a great dale of. Well, Hugh an' me's bin talkin' this matter over, an' we've come til the conclusion that the great danger o' this strack is that the workers may get led astray be religious rancour. There's bin attempts made in that direction already.

HUGH. Aye, did ye see that bit in the *Telly* the night about Nationalists breedin' discontent among the peaceable people o' Bilfast?

RAINEY. Naw, A've not read it yit. [*Looking at the paper*]. Is this it? [HUGH *looks at the paper*]. This bit.

HUGH. Aye, that. [*Reads.*] "We feel sure that the loyal peace-abiding Protestants of this, the greatest commercial city in Ireland, will not allow themselves to be led astray by Nationalist agitators from Dublin, and that they will see that their true interests lie in the same direction as those of their employers. We should be the last to encourage religious strife, but we would remind our readers, the loyal Orangemen of Ulster, that the leaders of this strike are Roman Catholics and Home Rulers." There's a nice thing fur ye. There's a lot o' fools in this town'll swallow that balderdash like anything.

MICHAEL. Ye see, Mr. Rainey, it's a fact that the leaders are mostly Cathliks, but that dussent mane anything at all, on'y there's some people'll think that it manes that the Pope'll arrive here next week an' ordher all the Prodesans t' be slaughtered. Now, Hugh an' me thought if you wur t' come an' take a leadin' part in the strack it wud show that Cathliks an' Prodesans wus workin' han' in han' fur the same object. D' ye see?

RAINEY. Aye, A see right enough.

HUGH. D' ye agree wi' it father?

RAINEY. A'm no' sure. It wants thinkin' about.

MRS. RAINEY. What thinkin' does it want to stan' thegither?

TOM. Sure, ye've on'y got to go on the platform an' say we're all in the same boat.

RAINEY. What d' you know about it? You're on'y a bit o' a lad.

TOM [*sulkily*]. Mebbe A know more'n some people think A do.

RAINEY. Aye, an' mebbe ye don't know s' much as ye think ye do.

MRS. RAINEY. Ah, well, mebbe atween the two he knows a brave bit. Are ye ready for some more tay, Michael?

MICHAEL. Aw, sure A'm done, Mrs. Rainey, thank ye.

MRS. RAINEY. Och, indeed, ye're not. Sure that's no tay fur a man.

MICHAEL. Aw, now, A've done rightly, thank ye. A cudden take another drap.

MRS. RAINEY. Well, A wunt coax ye, ye know.

MICHAEL. Aw, A wudden say "no" jus' fur the sake o' bein' polite.

MRS. RAINEY. Well, if ye're done, A'll jus' redd away these dishes an' things.

NORA [*rising*]. Let me do it, Mrs. Rainey.

MRS. RAINEY. Indeed A will not. Sit down there an' rest yerself. Sure ye've bin at yer work all day.

NORA. Well, ye can let me help ye anny way?

MRS. RAINEY [*smiling at her*]. Well, mebbe A will. Come on intil the scullery an' we'll wash up the dishes while these men have ther crack.

[MRS. RAINEY *and* NORA *remove the dishes and tea-things to the scullery: they pass in and out of the kitchen to the scullery, during a part of the following scene, but when all the tea-things have been removed, they remain in the scullery and the noise of dishes being washed is heard.*]

RAINEY. Where is this meetin' to take place?

MICHAEL. Well, we wur thinkin' o' St. Mary's Hall.

RAINEY. What!

HUGH. Sure, what does it matter where it takes place?

RAINEY. A Cathlik hall like that where Home Rulers always go?

HUGH. It's the only hall we can git

Sure, we'd take the Ulster on'y they wudden let us have it.

Tom. Ye cud have it at the Custom House Steps. Ye cud git more people there.

Michael. We wur thinkin' o' that.

Rainey. A wudden go anear St. Mary's Hall.

Hugh. Wud ye go til the Steps, then?

Rainey. Aye, A might do that.

Michael. Then we'll have it there. Man, Mr. Rainey, A'm quare an' glad ye're willin' till speak. It's a fine thing. Think o' it. Here's a chance t' kill bigotry and make the men o' Bilfast realise that onderneath the Cathlik an' the Prodesan there's the plain workin' man.

Hugh. Aye, that's it. They're jus' the same onderneath. They need the same food an' shelter an' clo'es, an' they suffer the same wrongs. The employers don't give a man better wages fur bein' a Prodesan or a Cathlik, do they?

Rainey. That's true enough.

Michael. A tell ye, Mr. Rainey, the employers have used religion to throw dust in wur eyes. They're eggin' us on t' fight one another over religion, so's we shan't have time til think about the rotten wages they give us. They set the Cathliks agin the Prodesans, an' the Prodesans agin the Cathliks, so's ye can't git the two to work thegither fur the good o' their class. Look at the way it is in the shipyards. Ye git men workin' thegither peaceably all the year til the Twelfth o' July, an' then they start batin' wan another fur the love o' God. There's yourself. Ye're a very dacent, intelligent man, but ye're suspicious o' me, an' ye don't like t' see Hugh an' me so chummy as we are, an' all acause A'm a Cathlik an' you an' he are Prodesans.

Rainey. There's a differs.

Michael. On'y a very little. Look at me. A'm like yerself. A'm a workin' man. A want t' marry an' have a wife an' childher an' keep them an' me dacently, an' A want t' sarve God in the way A wus brought up. You don't want no more nor that.

Tom. Aye, indeed, that's true. People are all the same the wurl' over. They jus' want t' be let alone.

Hugh. Man, da, whin A'm out wi' Mickey, A sometimes think what a fine thing it 'ud be if the workin' men o' Irelan' was to join their han's thegither an' try an' make a great country o' it. There wus a time whin Irelan' wus the islan' o' saints. By God, da, if we cud bring that time back again.

Rainey. It's a gran' dream.

Michael. To see the streets full o' happy men an' weemen again, their faces shinin' wi' the glory o' the Lord God, an' the childher runnin' about in the sun an' none o' them sick wi' hunger. Aw, if on'y we wud hould thegither an' not be led astray be people that want to keep us apart.

Rainey. It'll niver be.

[*Enter* Mrs. Rainey.]

Michael. Why not?

Rainey. There's such a quare differs atween a Cathlik an' a Prodesan.

Mrs. Rainey. Och, sure what differs does it make so long as ye act up til yer religion?

[*Enter* Nora.]

Michael. That's the God's truth, Mrs. Rainey. When a man's livin' at his best, it duss n't matter how much he starts differently thrum other people that's doin' the same — he gits quare an' like them in the end.

Rainey. There's a differs.

Nora. Dear, oh, dear, are ye still wranglin' wi' one another? What ones men are fur talkin'.

Mrs. Rainey [*pulling her down beside her on the sofa*]. Nivir mind, dear, let them go on talkin'. It keeps them quiet.

ACT II

The Scene is the same as in Act I. *A week has elapsed. It is the late afternoon.* Mrs. Rainey *is baking bread, there is a "griddle" on the fire, on which lie four baking soda-farls. Every now and then* Mrs. Rainey *leaves the baking-board and goes to the griddle to attend to the farls there.*

[*Her son* Hugh *enters.*]

Mrs. Rainey. Is that you, Hughie?

Hugh. Aye. [*He draws a chair up to the*

fire, and takes off his boots. His mother places a pair of carpet slippers by his chair. He puts them on.] Where's me da?

MRS. RAINEY. He's away out somewhere. He didden say where he wus goan an' A didden ask.

HUGH. Man-a-dear, he spoke quare an' well the day at the Steps. There wus quare cheers fur him whin he got down aff the chair.

MRS. RAINEY. Yer father wus alwis a good speaker.

HUGH. It'll be a fine thing fur him t' be able t' say he wus the man that give bigotry its death in Bilfast. The workin'-class 'll nivir be the same again. They know now that it dussen matter whether yer a Cathlik or a Prodesan, if ye're a workin' man ye're bein' groun' down be the masters.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, now, Hughie, the masters is not as bad as they're made out t' be. Sure, it' s no good callin' people bad names. It's alwis bin like this, an' ye can't expec' people t' change sudden. If ye wur brought up like them ye'd be the same as they are.

HUGH. They have n't got the troubles we have. They nivir see their childher starvin', do they?

MRS. RAINEY. Naw, perhaps, they don't git their trouble jus' like that, but they get it all the same. It's jus' a wee bit different on the outside. Wud ye like a wee drap o' tay an' a bit o' new bread?

HUGH. A 'll wait till ye have it yerself.

MRS. RAINEY. A'll not be long now — the bread's near done.

[*She bends over the "griddle," turning the farls, and now and then stands them on their sides so as to brown them all over. Some, baked, she removes. Her son watches her for a while as if anxious to speak to her, but undecided how to begin. She carries the last farl to the table.*]

HUGH. Will A take the griddle aff fur ye?

MRS. RAINEY. Aye, if ye plase. Put it in the scullery.

[*He takes the "griddle" out and when he returns stands beside her as she batches the bread.*]

MRS. RAINEY. Wur ye wantin' t' say anythin' to me, Hughie?

HUGH [*moving away*]. Naw. [*He looks at the fire for a second or two, then turns swiftly to his mother, and puts his arms round her neck.*] Ma, wud ye be vexed if A wus to marry Nora Murray?

MRS. RAINEY. Vexed, dear?

[*She pats him gently.*]

HUGH. Aye. She's a Cathlik.

MRS. RAINEY. A wudden be vexed at yer marryin' her. A like her quare an' well.

HUGH. But ye wudden like me t' marry a Cathlik?

MRS. RAINEY. A wus wunnerin', Hughie. It's strange t' think ye shud be wantin' t' marry a-tall. It 's — ye wur a wee lad — Ye're a man, Hughie. A har'ly know that yit.

HUGH. It's nacherl fur a man t' marry.

MRS. RAINEY. Aye, its nacherl. It is indeed! But ye wudden belave the strange it is for all that. A wus a young girl when A had you, Hughie, younger nor Nora, an' A wus quare an proud o' ye. A . . .

[*She sobs a little.*]

HUGH. A've bin a good son t' ye.

MRS. RAINEY [*drying her tears*]. Ye have, dear. Ye have that. A'm not complainin'. It's the way o' things.

HUGH. Ye'll not be vexed wi' me.

MRS. RAINEY [*smiling and kissing him*]. Vexed wi' ye. Sure, no. What wud A be vexed fur? It's yer father.

HUGH. Aye, A wunner how he'll take it?

MRS. RAINEY. Ye're very fond o' her are n't ye, Hughie?

HUGH. Aye!

MRS. RAINEY. It wud hurt ye not til marry her?

HUGH. It wud.

MRS. RAINEY. Mebbe if ye wur t' tell him that . . .

HUGH. She's not goan t' change her religion, an' A'm not goan t' change mine. If there's any childher . . .

MRS. RAINEY. That'll be the test, Hughie.

HUGH. We'll let them choose fur themselves whin they're oul' enough. Aw, Ma, half the religion in the wurl' is like a disease that ye get thrum yer father. A'm a Pro-

desan acause you an' me da are Prodesans, an' Nora's a Cathlik acause her parents wur Cathliks; an' you and he are Prodesans acause your da and ma wur Prodesans, an' they wur Cathliks acause their parents wur Cathliks. A'd like a time til come when a man wus a Cathlik or a Prodesan acause he felt in his sowl it wus the right thing til be.

MRS. RAINEY. Aye, indeed. But man, Hughie, whin ye come til bring up yer childher, it's quare how ye don't think like that. It's all right fur you an' her — ye're separate ye see; but it's different wi' childher. Ye can't say, this chile's me an' that chile's her. They're jus' like as if ye wur both lumped thegither. It's very difficult . . .

HUGH. Ye're not goan back on me, are ye?

MRS. RAINEY. Naw, Hughie, A'm not. A'm on'y tellin' ye that it's not as aisy as ye think it is.

HUGH [*putting his arm round her neck*]. Ma, A just love her.

MRS. RAINEY. A know, dear.

HUGH. It's like . . . Huh, A dunna how t' say it. It grips ye, an ye can't houl' out. Aw, an' it hurts. . . .

MRS. RAINEY. Aye, it hurts . . .

HUGH. Ye're a quare good wumman, ma. Sometimes A think if it wussen fur you A'd nivir a stapped here wi' him. He's that hard.

[*A knock is heard on the door and the voice of* MICHAEL O'HARA *cries, "Can A come in?"*]

MRS. RAINEY. Aye, come on.

[*Enter* MICHAEL.]

MICHAEL. How are ye all?

MRS. RAINEY. Ah, sure we're rightly.

MICHAEL. Is Mr. Rainey in?

HUGH. Naw, he's out somewhere.

MICHAEL. Man, Hughie, we'll have til be quare an' careful. That wee man Hart 's bin tryin' t' rouse the Or'ngemen agin the Cathliks. There wus a bit o' a fight last night in North Street, an' a chap cursed the Pope.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, dear-a-dear, what harm did the poor man do him that he should go an' curse him?

MICHAEL. Aye, indeed, ye're right. There's goan t' be a meetin' o' the Or'ngemen the night; an' Hart'll be there stirrin' up bad blood. We must get yer father t' go an' stap him.

HUGH. Aw, he'll go all right. His blood's up ye know. Once ye set him talkin' it's hard t' stap him. Man, ye did the right thing whin ye toul' him he might be the man til bring bigotry til an end. That plazed him greatly.

MICHAEL. We mussen let thim git fightin' thegither. If we can keep them thegither a while in peace, we'll git what we want thrum the masters; but if they once start fightin' thegither about religion, we'll git nathin. There'll be a riot —

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, God forbid. A remember the riot in 1883. Aw, dear-a-dear.

HUGH. Did ye see Nora as ye wur comin' up the street?

MICHAEL. Aye, A saw her goan intil a shap as A wus comin' along.

HUGH. Did ye spake til her?

MICHAEL. A toul' her A wus comin' here, an' she toul' me t' tell ye she'd be here herself afore long. Is Tom home yit?

MRS. RAINEY. Aye, he's out in the yard washin' it down.

MICHAEL. A wondher if he'd go an' fin' yer father, Hugh? Man, we mussen waste a minute.

HUGH [*going to the scullery-door*]. Here, Tom; come on in a minit.

TOM [*from the yard*]. What d' ye want?

HUGH. A want ye a minit.

[TOM, *in his shirt sleeves and with his trousers turned up, enters, carrying a broom.*]

TOM. What is it? . . . Aw, Micky, how're ye?

MICHAEL. Tom, will ye go an' try an' fin' yer father fur us?

TOM. Sure, A doan know where he is.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, ye'll fin' him as likely as not at the corner o' the Shankill.

TOM. A have n't finished the yard.

MRS. RAINEY. Hughie 'll do that.

TOM. Why can't he go?

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, now, doan't ask no

questions an' A'll tell ye no lies. Sure, Nora's comin' in in a minit.

TOM. Well, what's that got t' do wi' it?

MICHAEL. Gwon, Tom. A want t' talk t' Hughie fur a while.

TOM. That's the way. All o' ye shovin' ivirything ontil me. Lord save us, ye'd think A wus a chile. Me da talks t' me as if A wus a babby.

MRS. RAINEY. Now, Tom, ye know ye're just wantin' t' go, but ye're that contrairy ye pretend ye don't.

TOM. Huh! Here gimme me coat an' cap.

[MRS. RAINEY *fetches his coat and cap for him, and he puts himself tidy.*]

MICHAEL. Tell him it's quare an' pertickler, Tom.

TOM. Aye! [*He goes out.*]

HUGH. A've toul' me ma about Nora.

MICHAEL. Eh!

MRS. RAINEY. It's all right, Micky. A'm not the soart o' wumman til git annoyed at the like o' that.

MICHAEL. A know ye're not, Mrs. Rainey. Ye're a fine wumman.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, houl' yer tongue wi' ye.

MICHAEL. Does yer father know?

HUGH. Naw, not yit.

MICHAEL. D' ye think he'll min'?

HUGH. A don't know. A'm afeard . . .

MRS. RAINEY. He's a very headstrong man . . .

MICHAEL. What d' ye think he'd do if ne knew?

HUGH. A don't care what he does.

MICHAEL. Ye shudden talk like that, Hugh. Supposin' he wus to turn agin ye! . . .

HUGH. Let him turn. Me ma won't turn agin me.

MICHAEL. It might n't be agin you on'y, though?

HUGH. Eh!

MICHAEL. He might turn agin the Cathliks too? . . .

MRS. RAINEY. Ye mane he might n't help ye wi' the strack?

MICHAEL. Aye, that's just what A mane. Man, Hughie, we mussen run no risks. When wur ye goan t' tell him?

HUGH. A wus goan t' tell him the day. He knows A go out wi' her, an' A'm not the soart o' fella that goes up the road wi' a girl jus' t' pass the time.

MRS. RAINEY. He's bin askin' questions about her. [NORA *knocks at the door, which is opened by* MRS. RAINEY.] Aw, sure come on in. We wur jus' talkin' about ye.

NORA [*entering*]. Wur ye, indeed? Well, A suppose ye wur pullin' me t' bits?

HUGH. Aye, we just tuk all the character ye have away thrum ye.

MRS. RAINEY. Nora, Hughie 's just toul' me about you an' him . . .

NORA [*quickly*]. Oh, Mrs. Rainey! . . .

MRS. RAINEY. It's all right, dear. A'm very glad. [*She kisses* NORA.]

MICHAEL. We wur just talkin' about tellin' Mr. Rainey, an' wunnerin' what he'll say?

MRS. RAINEY. Ye'd better not tell him til the strack 's over. Then ye'll be sure he can't do no harm.

MICHAEL. A wus goan til suggest that, on'y A didden like.

HUGH. Maybe it wud be as well. Sure it'll on'y be a week or two.

MRS. RAINEY. Now, ye can go on intil the yard you two, the pair o' ye, and finish clanin' it, an' me an' Nora 'll have a wee crack thegither.

HUGH. Aw, there ye are, ye see. As soon as ivir two weemen git thegither the men have t' go out fur fear they'd be deaved wi' the talkin'.

NORA. Aw, indeed, if we didden talk thegither, A'm sure A don't kno' what 'ud become o' the men.

MRS. RAINEY. Ye're right, Nora. It's the weemen that keeps the men thegither if they on'y knew it.

MICHAEL. Aw, now, don't talk blether.

MRS. RAINEY. Go long wi' ye!

[MICHAEL *and* HUGH *go out laughing.*]

NORA. Are ye angry wi' me, Mrs. Rainey?

MRS. RAINEY. No, Nora, A'm not angry. What wud A be angry fur?

NORA. Me bein' a Cathlik.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, dear, ye cudden help that anny more nor Hughie cud help bein' a Prodesan. A wud be very angry if ye wur n't able til luk after him,

NORA. A'll do that all right.

MRS. RAINEY. Men make a quare fuss about religion an' wan thing an' another, but A'm thinkin' it's more important fur a wumman t' be able t' make a good dinner fur her man nor t' be able t' pray in the same church. A'm sure it's the same God anyway.

NORA. A'll be a good wife t' Hugh.

MRS. RAINEY. A know ye will. It makes a quare differs to a man that. It's a strange thing marriage.

NORA. Are ye sorry ye're married?

MRS. RAINEY. No, A'm not. Me an' my man has had our ups an' downs, an' he's a bit domineerin', but A think A'd do it again if A had me life over again. They're strange at first, an' they're not very considerate. They don't ondherstan' weemen . . . but ye git to ondherstan' them soon enough. Ye know, they're quare oul' humbugs when ye know them. They think they're that clivir, an' they make us think it too, at first; but sure, ye soon fin' them out. Och, dear, they're jus' like big childher. When Hughie wus a chile, he wus quare an' strong, an' there wus times afore he cud walk whin A cud har'ly houl' him, he wud twist about in me arms that much, an' sometimes A thought the chile imagined he wus more nor me match; but ye know, dear, A wus takin' care o' him all the time. It wus sore work sometimes, an' his da nivir seemed to ondherstan' that A got tired out; but sure, A jus' did it all right. It's the same wi' my man. He twists about an' thinks he's the quare big strong man, but A 'm jus' takin' care o' him the same as A did o' Hughie whin he wus a chile. Ye'll have t' do the same, Nora: it's the way o' the wurl' wi' weemen.

NORA. It's the quare strange thing a man is. A've felt that meself. Sometimes when A'm up the road wi' Hughie, an' A'm listenin' to him talkin', A think t' meself A'm quare an' beneath him; but jus' when A'm beginnin' t' feel downhearted about it, he'll mebbe say somethin', an' A know then that A'm not beneath him a-tall, that A'm. . . . A don't know how t' say it. . . . It's a quare feelin'.

MRS. RAINEY. A know, A know. Ivry wumman has it sometime or other. Ye jus' feel that men are not near as clivir as they think they are, an' ye're not sarry fur it.

NORA. Aye, ye feel quare an' glad. Ye wud think mebbe ye'd be disappointed at fin'in' them out; but ye're not.

MRS. RAINEY. They're jus' childher. Manny a time, whin A'm sittin' here darnin' the socks, A think that God made us acause He saw what a chile a man is. He jus' made us til luk after them.

NORA. A often think that about Hughie. There's times an' times whin A jus' want t' gether him up in me arms, an' houl' him til me tight, an' putt him t' sleep. . . .

MRS. RAINEY. Aye, Aye! An' yer chile hurts ye thrum the minit it's born til the minit it dies. It's not like that wi' a man, dear. A man's nivir tied til a chile like a wumman. Ye have t' break the cord til separate them. It's different in a man. He can take a pride in his chile. If it does well, his pride is plazed, an' if it does n't his pride is hurt; but a wumman feels it tuggin' inside her. . . . Aw, dear, dear, what are we talkin' like this fur? Sure, the men'll be in in a minit, an' we'll have til take care o' them, an' not be worryin' about wurselves.

NORA. Will A go an' see if they're finished in the yard yit?

MRS. RAINEY. Aye, do.

[NORA *kisses her, and* MRS. RAINEY *hugs the girl to her tightly.* NORA *goes out by the scullery, and* MRS. RAINEY *brings an armchair forward to the fire, and begins to darn socks. In a little while the street door opens, and* TOM, *followed by his father, enters.*]

TOM. Here's me da.

RAINEY. Aye, A hear they want me.

MRS. RAINEY. Yes. They're out in the yard now. Tom, tell them. [TOM *goes to the scullery and calls the others in.*] Nora Murray 's wi' them.

RAINEY. What's she doin' there?

MRS. RAINEY. She jus' come in til have a crack wi' me.

RAINEY. Huh! It's a funny way o' havin' it fur her t' be out in the yard wi'

Hughie, an' you t' be darnin' socks in the kitchen.

MRS. RAINEY. We've had it, man, dear. Weemen dussen take s' long over their talkin' as men?

[*Enter* TOM, NORA, MICHAEL, *and* HUGH *in the order named.*]

NORA. Good-evenin', Mr. Rainey.

RAINEY [*shortly*]. Good-evenin'. [*To* MICHAEL.] Ye wur wantin' me?

MICHAEL. A wus.

NORA. A'll have t' be goin' now.

MRS. RAINEY. Sure, ye're in no hurry. Stap an' take a drap o' tay wi' us.

NORA. Aw, indeed, A must go home.

MRS. RAINEY. Ye're sure?

NORA. A am, indeed.

MRS. RAINEY. Well, mebbe, Hughie'll see ye home.

HUGH. A wus jus' goin' t' siggest that.

RAINEY. Sure, it's not dark.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, man-a-dear, don't ye know at this time o' year it gits dark quare an' sudden. A'm sure, Michael wants t' have a quiet talk wi' ye. Tom, A want ye t' go roun' til the grocer's fur me.

[HUGH *and* NORA *get ready to go.*]

TOM. Can't Hughie do it on the way back?

MRS. RAINEY. Naw, he can't.

TOM. It's alwis me.

RAINEY. Do as yer ma tells ye, an' don't give no back answers.

TOM. Luk here, da, A'm not goin' til be spoke t' like that.

RAINEY. Houl' yer tongue, will ye?

MRS. RAINEY. Tom, dear, come here.

HUGH. Well, we'll go now. A'll be back afore long, Michael.

NORA. Good-night t' ye, Mrs. Rainey.

MRS. RAINEY. Good-night t' ye, Nora.

NORA. Good-night t' ye all.

ALL. Good-night.

TOM. Wait a minit, an' A'll come wi' ye.

MRS. RAINEY. Naw, A'm not ready fur ye. [*Exit* NORA *and* HUGH.]

TOM [*quietly to his mother*]. Ye might ha' let me go wi' them. It wud ha' bin comp'ny.

MRS. RAINEY [*very quietly*]. Have n't ye got no sense, man?

MICHAEL. Ye heerd tell o' this meetin' o' the Or'ngemen, A suppose? Hart's comin' thrum Dublin til address it.

RAINEY. Aye, A met the Worshipful Master on the Shankill the day, an' he toul' me about it.

MICHAEL. Hart'll stir up bitterness atween the Cathliks an' the Prodesans if he's let have his way.

MRS. RAINEY. A don't like that wee man.

TOM. He makes his living out o' breedin' bigotry.

RAINEY. What d' you know about it? Let me tell you he's a man that's done good work fur the Prodesan religion.

TOM. It's not good t' be settin' men fightin' wi' wan another.

RAINEY. Houl' yer tongue. Ye dunna what ye're talkin' about.

TOM. Well, if A'm not wanted here, A'm goin' out. It's no pleasure t' me t' stay here wi' a lotta nirpin' goin on.

MRS. RAINEY. Ye can jus' go til the grocer's now. [*Pats him on the back.*] Nivir mind, Tom. Sure, he dussen mane half he says.

[*She speaks in undertones to* TOM, *who presently puts on his cap and goes out.*]

MICHAEL. D' ye think ye cud go up til the meetin' Mr. Rainey, the morra, an' counteract Hart's influence? Ye know the men think a lot o' yer opinion.

RAINEY. A might go.

MICHAEL. Ye will, wun't ye? A can't go meself. A'm a Cathlik, an' Hughie can't, he's not an Or'ngeman . . .

MRS. RAINEY. It wud be a pity t' spoil the good effect ye've made at the last minit.

MICHAEL. It wud, indeed, Mrs. Rainey. We're doin' so well . . . Aw, if that man Hart wud on'y stay away? . . . It's enough t' break yer heart whin ye've bin tryin' as hard as ye can til do somethin', an' someone comes whin ye've near done it, an' pushes it over.

RAINEY. Aye, it is that.

MRS. RAINEY. The quare good work in the wurl' that's bin spoiled be liars an' fools.

MICHAEL. It's tarrible t' think, Mr.

Rainey, that you an' me shud be sittin' here doin' wur best t' putt things right, an' all the time there's a man comin' thrum Dublin til spoil it all.

MRS. RAINEY. They're alwis comin', them people, be express trains. They travel quare an' quick.

MICHAEL. Ye won't disappoint us, Mr. Rainey?

RAINEY. A'll go all right. We'll see who has the most influence, me or Hart?

MICHAEL. Aw, there's not much doubt about that.

MRS. RAINEY. Well, now ye've done yer talkin' ye'll have til have somethin' til ate. Come on an' help me til lay the table, Michael.

MICHAEL. Sure, an' I will gladly, Mrs. Rainey.

[*He goes up and helps her to bring the table forward.* MRS. RAINEY *puts a pair of slippers at her husband's feet.*]

MRS. RAINEY. Here, let me take yer boots off.

RAINEY. Aw, A'll do that meself.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, g' long wi' ye, ye ould footer. Ye'd be breakin' the laces or somethin'.

[*She unlaces his boots, whilst* MICHAEL *spreads the table-cloth.*]

ACT III

It is the late afternoon of the next day. MRS. RAINEY *is sitting in the armchair in front of the fire, darning socks. She is singing softly to herself. The street-door opens and her husband enters.*

MRS. RAINEY. There ye are, then.

RAINEY. Aye! Where's the lads?

MRS. RAINEY. A don't know. They're out somewhere. Wur ye spakin' agin the day?

RAINEY. A wus spakin' twice the day.

MRS. RAINEY. Man, dear, ye're gettin' the quare orator. Sure, ye'll be in Parliament wan o' these days if ye go on at that rate.

RAINEY [*not displeased*]. Aw, now, hould yer wheesht.

MRS. RAINEY [*holding up the socks to view*]. But sure ye'll just wear out the socks the same whativir ye are. A nivir saw such an a man for holes in his socks as you in me born days. A'm nivir done mendin'.

RAINEY. Aw, well, sure it's pastime fur ye. Whin ye've nathin' else til do, ye can sit down an' take yer aise an' darn a few socks. It's the quare aisy time weemen has be men.

MRS. RAINEY. Och, indeed, ye know little about it. Will ye be ready fur yer tay yit?

RAINEY. A will in a wee while. Is the washin' come home yit? A must have a clane "dickey" fur the Lodge the night.

MRS. RAINEY. An' what are ye goin' t' do at the Lodge the night?

RAINEY. Sure, didden ye know A wus goin' til spake til the Or'ngemen the night so's til counteract the influence o' that man thrum Dublin?

MRS. RAINEY. Och, aye, A furgot. Three spaches in wan day . . . aw, dear, dear, what a dale o' argyin' men have til have. Yer washin's on the bed.

RAINEY. A'll jus' go an' putt meself tidy, an' mebbe be the time A come down ye'll have the tay ready?

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, ye're in no hurry fur yer tay. Ye can wait awhile til the others come in. A'm expectin' Mickie an' Nora in wi' Hughie and Tom til tay.

RAINEY. Thon girl's here brave an' often.

MRS. RAINEY. An' what wudden she be here fur? She might as well be here as annywhere else.

RAINEY. Well, mebbe it's all right, but man-a-dear, if A thought anythin' wus comin' out o' it . . .

MRS. RAINEY. Och, man, boys is alwis runnin' after girls. If a boy wus t' be married til iv'ry girl he courted, sure, he'd be a Mormon.

RAINEY. Aye! [*He stands in silence for a moment or two and then crosses to his wife's side.*] It's a quare solemn thing, marriage.

MRS. RAINEY. Och, it's not as solemn as people make out. Sure, we're not solemn?

RAINEY. It's solemn all the same. It's the pickin' an' the choosin' . . . ye have t' be careful. A man an' a wumman ought t' be very much the same afore they marry.

Ye have t' live wi' wan another, an' if there's a big differs atween ye, it's quare an' bad.

MRS. RAINEY. Sure, some people are that different thrum each other they nivir find it out.

RAINEY. Aw, but there's some things like religion . . .

MRS. RAINEY. Now, now, religion can take care o' itself. Gwon an' put on yer dickey fur dear sake, or ye'll be makin' yer three spaches t' me afore A know where A am.

RAINEY [*patting her on the head, and laughing*]. Hey, ye're the funny ould wumman. [*He goes up the stairs.*]

MRS. RAINEY. Aye, an' ye 're the funny ould man.

RAINEY [*speaking over the bannisters*]. We're the funny ould couple thegither.

MRS. RAINEY. G' long wi' ye.

RAINEY. We've had the brave times thegither, have n't we?

MRS. RAINEY. Sure, it's not bin so bad.

RAINEY. An' we'll have the quare good times yit. There's fine work t' be done in the wurl', smoothin' things out. Aw, it's gran', it's gran', an' it's a privilege fur me til be able t' do it.

MRS. RAINEY. Indeed, that's the truth ye're sayin', on'y there's manny a man spoils his work wi' temper.

RAINEY. A'm not a bad-tempered man. A'm the most considerate man ye cud think o'. Luk at the way A let them Cathliks come intil the house, an' me own son walkin' up the road wi' one o' them. Ye wudden call that bigited wud ye?

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, that's not much. Sometimes ye have til choose atween yer work an' yer life. It wud be the quare bad thing til choose yer life.

RAINEY. Aye!

[*He comes down the stairs again and stands before the fire.*]

MRS. RAINEY. D' ye think ye'd let anythin' stan' atween ye an' the work ye're goin' t' do?

RAINEY. It's a gran' work, t' make peace. Aw, when ye come t' think o' it, it's awful the way the wurl's bin goin' on up til now. Men fightin' wi' wan another, an' prosperin' out o' wan another's misfortune. War all the time.

MRS. RAINEY. Aye, an' the wurl' not a ha'penny the better fur it.

RAINEY. Ye're right. Ye're right. Ye are, indeed. An' ye've on'y got til putt out yer han's til wan another, an' grip them, an' it's all over.

MRS. RAINEY. An' yer enemy issen yer enemy a-tall. Aw, that's quare, t' be seein' enemies where there is no enemies.

RAINEY. Aye!

MRS. RAINEY. A wondher what ye'd do if ye wur in a fix atween yer religion an' yer desire t' make peace. Somethin' wud have t' give way.

RAINEY. Aw, A'd do the right thing, A can tell ye. [*He goes up the stairs.*] Ye can trust me. A'm not a chile. A've got a bit o' wit in me head, A can tell ye. A'm not the one til be misled.

[*The door opens hurriedly and* TOM *enters in excitement.*]

TOM. Hi, ma, come on quick. Ye're wanted.

MRS. RAINEY. Whativir's the matter wi' ye?

RAINEY [*from the stairs*]. Can't ye control yerself, an' not be runnin' about like a wil' thing.

TOM. It's Mickey! He's got his head cut open.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, Lord bliss us.

RAINEY. What's that ye say?

TOM. A lot o' wee lads wus singin' a party tune, an' cursin' the Pope, an' he tould thim they shudden do the like o' that, an' a drunk man wus goin' by, an' hit him on the head wi' a belt. He's in Martin's shop. Come on quick, an' luk after him. Sure, he'll bleed til death.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, now, don't put yerself out s' much. Sure, people don't bleed til death as aisy as that. Get me me shawl fur dear sake.

RAINEY. That's bigotry fur ye. A man has t' be drunk afore he'd do the like o' that.

TOM. Be the luk o' the people in this town, an' the way they go on, ye'd think they wur alwis drunk. Here's yer shawl, ma. Come on, quick.

MRS. RAINEY. Did ye go fur the doctor?

TOM. Naw.

MRS. RAINEY. Well, why didden ye go fur him afore ye come fur me. Run now, will ye, an' A'll go on til Martin's?

[*Exit* TOM.]

RAINEY. That's right. Poor lad, bring him back here. Will A come wi' ye?

MRS. RAINEY. Now, what wud ye do that fur? Ye'd be makin' spaches til the doctor, an' gettin' in the way. Gwon an' put on yer dickey, an' try an' be dacent-lukkin' whin A come back.

RAINEY. That drunk man ought t' be putt in jail.

MRS. RAINEY. There's many does worse nor him whin they're not drunk, an' they're putt in Parliament. A wun't be long.

[*She goes out quickly.*]

[RAINEY *stands on the stairs for a while in thought, and then goes up to the bedroom, shutting the door noisily behind him. There is quiet in the kitchen for a little while; then the door opens and* HUGH *and* NORA *enter.*]

HUGH. Sure, come on in.

NORA. Och, no, A wun't come in now.

HUGH. Och, come on. There's no wan in. [*He goes to the scullery and shouts into the yard.*] Are ye in, ma? [*As there is no response, he returns to the kitchen.*] Sure, ye might as well stay now ye're here. A expect me ma's just away out til the shop.

NORA. Is yer da in?

HUGH. Aw, he's out somewhere, A s'pose. He's quarely taken on wi' the notion o' spakin'. Sure, he'll be goin' on makin' spaches fur ivir if wur not careful, jus' like wan o' them men ye see in the market sellin' ould clo'es, or a member o' Parliament on the Twelfth o' July, whin he's half drunk an' near out o' his min' wi' the noise o' the drums.

NORA. Aw, now, ye shudden be makin' fun o' yer da.

HUGH. A'm not makin' no fun o' him. A'm beginnin' t' respect him.

NORA. Och, but sure ye alwis did that ivir since ye wur a wee lad that height.

[*She lets her hand fall to the level of her knee.*]

HUGH. Naw, A wus afeard o' him; but A'm beginnin' t' respect him. It's a quare thing that whin a man begins t' respect his da. Sure, sit down.

NORA [*sitting down on the sofa*]. Hughie. [*She takes him by the hand and he sits down beside her.*] D' ye think yer da'll be very angry about you an' me?

HUGH. A suppose he'll storm an' rave awhile, but sure if he sees we're determined he'll give way an' make the best o' it. It's no good shoutin' at what ye can't help.

NORA. Ye won't let him separate us, Hughie?

HUGH. Separate us. Naw, A wun't let him do that. Man, dear, it wud take a quare man til separate us now.

NORA. An' ye wun't let them tempt ye? . . .

HUGH. What wud they tempt me wi', fur dear sake?

NORA. Mebbe they'll be tellin' ye t' lave me fur the sake o' Irelan'. Aw, A know, A know they'll do it. Mickie'll try. Sure, he dussen care what happens s' long as his plans fur Irelan' is all right. He'd sacrifice his own da an' ma fur that.

HUGH. It's fine t' have a spirit like that. Not til let anythin' come atween ye an' the thing ye want.

NORA. Wud ye give me up, Hughie, fur Irelan'?

HUGH. Naw, A wudden.

[*She clutches him tightly to her.*]

NORA. Aw, my man, A cudden let ye go. A'd hould on til ye if the wurl' wus til fall in anondher wur feet if A didden let go. [*She kisses him eagerly.*] A don't care fur nathin' but you. . . .

HUGH. A love ye, too, Nora.

NORA. A'm ashamed til be talkin' like this, but A can't help it. A'd let Irelan' go til hell fur ye, Hugh.

HUGH. Aw, don't be sayin' that.

NORA. It's true, it's true! When A think mebbe they'll take ye thrum me, A go near mad wi' fear.

HUGH. They'll nivir do that. [*He puts his arms tightly around her.*] It's a quare fine thing t' be in love wi' you, Nora. Sometimes whin A'm thinkin' about it A can't ondherstan' it. A'm just like a man

wi' somethin' inside him that wants t' come out, an' can't fin' the way. Ye know what A mane, don't ye? A want til tell ye, but A don't know how, an' A just stan' still wi' me tongue clackin' in me mouth like a dumb man's. [*The door of the bedroom opens and* RAINEY *appears at the top of the stairs. He is dressed in his Sunday clothes. At the sound of the voices he stops and listens.*] A want til tell iv'rybuddy A'm in love wi' ye, an' goin' t' marry ye. A feel prouder nor the King o' Englan' or the Lord Mayor o' Bilfast. [*He jumps up excitedly and drags her up beside him.* RAINEY *descends a few steps, quietly, listening.*] There'll not be a happier man in Irelan' nor me when A'm married t' ye, da or no da.

[*He kisses her again and holds her closely to him.*]

RAINEY. What's that ye say? [*They start apart from one another, and look up at the old man, who regards them silently, and then, without speaking, descends into the kitchen.*] Did A hear ye sayin' ye wur goin' til marry this wumman.

HUGH. Ye did!

RAINEY [*to* NORA]. Ye're goin' til take him, A s'pose?

NORA. A am.

RAINEY. Ye're a Cathlik are n't ye?

NORA. Yes, A am.

RAINEY. Issen it agin yer religion t' marry a Prodesan?

NORA. It can be done, but A don't care.

RAINEY. Will ye turn Prodesan if ye marry him?

NORA. Naw, A wun't.

HUGH. An' A'll not ask her nayther. What call wud she have til do the like o' that when she belaves in it?

RAINEY. If she belaves in it, what does she want wi' a man that dussen, will ye tell me that?

HUGH. It's acause A care fur her, an' she cares fur me . . .

RAINEY. What's carin' til yer sowl, man. If ye damn yerself in the nixt wurl' for the pleasure o' a wumman in this, what good'll that do ye? Man, man, think what ye're doin'.

HUGH. A've made up me min', da.

RAINEY. Ye're goin' til marry her?

HUGH. Aye, A am.

RAINEY. Aw, what a fool A've bin. [*To* NORA.] Ye trapped me nicely. A wus t' be the tool in yer han's, an' do yer work fur ye, an' whin A wussen lukkin' ye wur t' marry me son. You an' that man O'Hara . . . aw, what a fool A've bin. They wur right whin they said the strack was a Papish plot [*furiously*]. Aw, wumman, git outa me house, will ye, afore A strack ye down?

HUGH. My God, da, if ye touch her, A'll brain ye.

RAINEY [*calming himself with a great effort*]. Aye, ye've learned yer lesson well. Ye've turned agin yer own father. That's her, A s'pose?

NORA. Indeed, indeed, A nivir . . .

RAINEY. Don't spake til me, wumman.

HUGH. Don't talk til her like that. She's not the dirt aneath yer feet.

RAINEY [*to* NORA, *quietly*]. Ye know ye'd nivir be happy thegither. Ye ought t' marry a man o' yer own faith. It's not right t' be marryin' out o' yer religion.

NORA. A want him . . .

HUGH. An' A want her, too. An' A'll not give her up.

RAINEY. What 'ud be the good o' ye marryin'. Yer frien's'll forsake ye. [*To* NORA.] All yer own people'll cast ye off acause ye married a Prodesan, an' A'll nivir own him fur a son if he marries a Cathlik.

HUGH. A can't help that.

RAINEY [*to* NORA]. Ye wudden ruin him, wud ye? Ye'd be turnin' him agin his people.

NORA. A'd be havin' him meself.

RAINEY. Are ye thinkin' on'y o' yerself? Have ye no thought fur no wan else? There's no love where there's selfishness.

HUGH. What are you thinkin' of? On'y an ould superstition. Ye've somethin' in yer min' about Cathliks an' Prodesans, an' ye're thinkin' o' that all the time. Ye're not thinkin' o' her an' me, an' ye don't care about us bein' happy. Ye're alwis batin' an Or'nge drum.

RAINEY. That's the quare disrespectful way t' spake t' yer father. A brought ye intil the wurl' an' rared ye well, an' this is the thanks A git.

HUGH. Sure, A didden ask ye t' bring me intil the wurl?

RAINEY. A've bin a good father t' ye.

HUGH. D' ye want credit fur that? Sure, ye had t' be. Ye did what ye had t' do an' ye expect me t' have no will o' me own in return fur it. Ye've bullied me since A wus a chile.

RAINEY. A've not bullied ye. A've bin starn wi' ye fur yer own good.

HUGH. Luk at the way ye talk t' Tom. He dare n't open his mouth fur ye, but what ye call him out o' his name, an' make him luk like a fool afore strangers. D' ye want t' know why we've stud it so long? It's not fur your sake, but acause o' me ma. We'd agone long ago if it hadden bin fur her. Yer starnness an' yer good trainin' wus on'y bullyin', that's all it wus.

RAINEY. There's no good talkin' t' ye, ye've bin led astray. A'll ask this wumman if she's satisfied wi' what she's done. [*To* NORA.] Ye've turned him agin his father, an' made him say things til me that he'll rue til his dyin' day. A wondher if ye're satisfied?

NORA. Aw, ye're a hard man, Mr. Rainey. Ye know A've nivir said a word again ye. A've alwis stud up fur ye.

RAINEY. Will ye give him up?

NORA. Ye want me t' do somethin' A can't do. He's the on'y man A ivir thought of. A can't give him up. A need him.

RAINEY. It's a terrible thing fur a wumman til come atween a man an' his parents.

HUGH. Sure, they're doin' it iv'ry day.

NORA [*to* MR. RAINEY]. A'll be a good wife til him. A will, indeed. Ye'll nivir regret lettin' him marry me.

RAINEY. A'm not lettin' him. He's doin' it wi'out me will.

NORA. Aw, but ye will let him, wun't ye?

RAINEY. If ye'll turn Prodesan A will.

NORA. Naw, A wun't do that. A can't give up me religion.

RAINEY. Can't ye give up him, then?

NORA. A can't give him up ayther.

RAINEY. Then A've no more t' say. He'll lave this house the night onless he gives ye up. A can't have him here.

NORA. Aw, don't say that, Mr. Rainey.

RAINEY. A don't want no more t' say t' ye. A've done wi' ye. Ye've putt anger in me son agin me.

HUGH. A don't care. It'll be no grief til me til lave the house. A'm a man, an' not a chile, an' A'll choose me wife where A like, an' not where you like. A'm not afeard.

RAINEY. Them that dishonours their father an' their mother'll rue it in the Last Day.

HUGH. A'm not afeard. A'll git lodgin's the night. A'll not trouble ye wi' me comp'ny anny longer. [NORA *weeps helplessly.*] Don't be cryin', dear. Sure, this is on'y a bit o' bother that'll not last fur ivir. We knew it 'ud have t' come some time. It's no good complainin' acause it's come sooner nor we thought. We'll be married the quicker.

[*The door opens, and* MRS. RAINEY *followed by* TOM *and* MICHAEL, *enters.*]

MRS. RAINEY [*to* MICHAEL]. Now, come on in an' rest yerself. [*To her husband.*] Fur dear sake, what's the matter wi' ye. Ye'd think ye'd seen a ghost ye're that white.

RAINEY [*pointing to* MICHAEL]. Sen' that Fenian out o' my house.

MRS. RAINEY. Eh!

RAINEY [*with great anger*]. A say, sen' that Fenian out o' my house, A tell ye.

MRS. RAINEY. Och, ye're not right the day. Ye're beside yerself wi' all that spache-makin'. Take no notis o' him, Mickie, but come on in an' lie down on the sofa, fur sure indeed it's a long rest ye're needin' more nor annythin' else.

RAINEY. D' ye hear me, wumman? A'll have no Fenians here.

MRS. RAINEY. Ye must be crazed, man. What's the matter wi' ye? Tom, git yer father a drink o' watter.

RAINEY. Sit down an' listen t' me, an' mebbe ye'll ondherstan' what A mane. Hugh's goin' til marry that girl.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, dear, that's a dreadful thing, issen it?

RAINEY. Aye, it is. She's a Cathlik.

MRS. RAINEY. Och, is that all? A thought be the way ye wur talkin' she wus a murderer an' a brute baste rowled intil wan.

RAINEY. It's quaren funny, issen it?

MRS. RAINEY. A wondher if ye'll ivir larn anny sense? What differs does it make what religion she is, s' long as she's a good wife til him. D' ye think if A cudden cook yer dinner fur ye an' keep the house clane an' bring yer childher up, it 'ud be anny consolation t' ye that A wus a Prodesan. A can see ye goin' about the house, an' it all dirty, tellin' yerself it dussen matter about the muck acause yer wife's a good Or'nge-wumman. Och, man, don't talk blether.

RAINEY. Ye wud think t' hear you, the on'y thing in the wurl' that matters is atin'.

MRS. RAINEY. It's all that matters wi' most men. Sit down, now, an' try an' be sensible. Shut the door, Tom, an' keep the draught off Michael. Sit down all o' ye. Come here, Mickie, an' sit be the fire. [*To* RAINEY.] Luk at his head. That's what you quare intelligent men do til show the clivir ye are. Aw, there's times when a wumman's sick o' men an' their folly. Can't ye go through the wurl' without hammerin' wan another like bastes o' the fiel'.

RAINEY. Ye 're on his side.

MRS. RAINEY. A'm on no side. A wumman has no right t' be choosin' sides. There's right wi' iv'ry man, an' there's wrong, too. A'm fur him, an' A'm fur you, too. Ye're both right, an' ye're both wrong, but sure ye're just the same t' me whether ye are or not. How are ye now, Mickie?

MICHAEL. A'm all right, thank ye. Mebbe, A'd better be goin'?

MRS. RAINEY. Ye'll stay where ye are. Now, what's the bother wi' ye all?

RAINEY. A come down the stairs an' A saw him kissin' her.

MRS. RAINEY. Ye'd no business t' be watchin'.

RAINEY. A wussen watchin'. A didden know they wur there. A heerd him tellin' her he wud marry her after the strack wus over.

MRS. RAINEY. Well, that's sensible enough. Ye wudden have him marry her while it's on, wud ye?

RAINEY. A don't want him til marry her a-tall.

HUGH. It's not what you want . . .

RAINEY. Don't spake t' me again. Ye're no son o' mine.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, now, ye can't cut off yer relations like that. He's yer son whether ye like it or not.

RAINEY. A wun't own him.

HUGH. Nobuddy wants ye to.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, now, Hughie, don't be talkin' t' him like that. Sure, he's yer father.

HUGH. That's no rayson why he should bully me.

MRS. RAINEY. Naw, but it's an excuse. Mebbe, ye'll be like it yerself wan day?

TOM. Lord save us, there's alwis a row goin' on in this house.

RAINEY. Hould yer tongue, will ye? Don't let a word out o' yer head. A've enough trouble on me min' wi'out you addin' til it.

MRS. RAINEY. Does it ivir occur til ye, John, that Tom's not a wee lad anny more? He's a brave big fella, now.

RAINEY. He has no wit.

TOM. Aye, A have. A lot more'n ye think, on'y ye nivir let me git a word out o' me, but ye near snap the head o' me. A'm gettin' quaren tired o' it, A tell ye.

RAINEY. Aye, you'll be lavin' me, too. That's the way. Bring up yer childher well, an' spare them nathin', an' they'll turn on ye in yer ould age.

MRS. RAINEY. Mebbe, if ye wur a wee bit more o' a frien' til them, an' a wee bit less o' a father, they wudden turn on ye so readily. Ye're alwis wantin' til make them do things acause ye're their father, instid o' waitin' fur them til do it o' their own free will.

HUGH. Ye may as well know all, ma. A've bin turned out. A'm goin' t' luk fur lodgin's.

MRS. RAINEY. Who's turned ye out?

HUGH. Me da.

MRS. RAINEY. What right had he t' turn ye out?

RAINEY. A'm master o' this house, amn't A?

MRS. RAINEY. No, ye're not. There's no master here. It's my house, as much as yours. Ye didden ask my lave til turn him

out, an' ye wun't git it. D' ye hear? If ye turn him out, ye turn me out, too?

TOM. Aye, an' me.

RAINEY. Aye, ye're all agin me, but A'll do me duty. A'm agin a man marryin' out o' his religion, an' A'll stick til that no matter what happens. [*To* NORA, *who is crying.*] Aye, ye may well cry. Ye've brought great trouble on this house. A might ha' known that whin A mixed meself up wi' Cathliks. There's no good can come o' that. Ye wur all quaren clivir, wur n't ye? Ye wudden say nathin' about this til after the strack. Ye'd use me fur yer purposes, an' be stabbin' me in the back all the time.

MICHAEL. There nivir wus no thought o' that in my min'. If ye think this is plasin' til me, Mr. Rainey, ye're quaren mistaken. A saw a chance o' unitin' the people o' Irelan' agin, an' A've worked fur it an' suffered fur it. Man, man, what's your grief til mine? You're thinkin' o' a son, an' A'm thinkin' o' a nation. Man, ye wun't let this stan' in the way. Think o' the gran' wurk ye wur goin' til do.

RAINEY. A've done wi' it.

MICHAEL. Naw, naw. Ye can't go back now. Sure, there's many waitin' fur a sign thrum you. We've set wur hopes on ye. Ye're not goin' til destroy them, are ye?

RAINEY. A've done wi' it, A've done wi' it.

MRS. RAINEY. Man, ye don't know what ye're sayin'. Ye wudden stap now, wud ye, whin ye've near done the work?

RAINEY. A tell ye A've done wi' it.

MICHAEL. Mr. Rainey, think fur a minit. Ye know this is just the critical time. A strong man can do what he likes wi' the people now. They're in the half-an'-half state. Ye can make them wurk thegither or ye can make them fight thegither. You're the man can do that. Hart hassen got the influence you have. Anythin' he does, you can undo aisily. He's goin' about now talkin' o' Popery an' priest-rule, an' urgin' the Prodesans til break the strack acause it's directed be Cathliks. S' long as you stick up fur us, there's an answer til that, but if ye desert us, there's none, an' all the good we've done will be destroyed.

RAINEY. A belave that man Hart's right.

MICHAEL. What!

RAINEY. A belave he's right. It is a Papish plot, the strack. How can A belave anythin' else whin A see it goin' on in me own house. Me son taken thrum me be a Papish wumman!

MICHAEL. Aw, man, ye don't mane that?

RAINEY. A do.

MICHAEL. Ye'll not ondo iv'rything fur the sake o' that?

RAINEY. A'll do no more. A've done wi' it all. A'm not goin' till the Or'nge Hall the night.

MICHAEL. Aw, but ye've promised.

MRS. RAINEY. Ye can't go back on yer word.

RAINEY. A can, an' A will.

HUGH. It's a mane thing t' do. Ye think ye'll stap Nora an' me thrum marryin' acause o' the strack, but ye wun't.

NORA. Aw, A nivir thought o' that.

MICHAEL. Will ye go if they give wan another up?

RAINEY. A'm not sure. A har'ly know where A am, yit.

MICHAEL. Man, there's no time t' be lost. Will ye go til the Or'nge Hall the night an' spake agin Hart if they agree not til marry wan another?

RAINEY. How'll A know they'll kape their word?

MICHAEL. Ye'll have til trust them.

RAINEY. An' if they betray me?

MICHAEL. Ye'll have til lave them til God. Sure, treachery be anny wan else is no rayson fur treachery be you.

HUGH. Ye need n' bother yerself, we'll not agree til that.

MICHAEL. It's not you A'm goin' til ask. Nora, ye know what this means, don't ye? Ye know what we're workin' fur?

NORA. Aye.

MICHAEL. It's a bigger thing nor you are, issen it? Ye know it is, for all ye won't answer. It's Irelan' agin you. Irelan' 's a bigger thing nor you an' Hugh an' me an' all o' us towled thegither.

NORA. A don't belave it. A'm in the wurl' t' be happy, an' A'll be happy wi' him.

MICHAEL. What'll yer happiness be till ye, if it manes the destruction o' a nation?

NORA. A don't care.

RAINEY. Have ye no thought fur others?

NORA. No, A have n't. On'y fur him an' me.

HUGH. Ye've no thought yerself fur anythin' but yer blin' superstitions an' yer bigotry. You're a man til talk about sacrifice, whin ye'd destroy Irelan' fur yer damned bigotry.

MICHAEL. Don't be talkin' like that. Sure, it's his faith. He can't go back on his faith.

HUGH. A can't go back on Nora.

MICHAEL. Will ye give him up, Nora? It's no good talkin' t' him. He's demented wi' love.

NORA. No. A won't give him up. A need him, A need him.

MICHAEL. What's your need til the wurl's need?

MRS. RAINEY. Man, Michael, when yer as ould as A am, ye'll know that yer own need is the wurl's need. It's love that Nora an' Hugh needs, an' it's love the wurl' needs. Ye're wrong til be suggestin' partin' til them. Can't ye see, they're doin' the very thing ye want Irelan' t' do. It's Cathlik an' Prodesan joinin' han's thegither. It's quare ye shud be wantin' til separate them.

MICHAEL. It's acause A want a bigger joinin' o' hands. It's not enough fur a man an' a wumman til join han's. A want til see the whole wurl' at peace.

MRS. RAINEY. Ye'll on'y git that be men an' weemen bein' at peace. Him an' her, Mickie, are bigger than the wurl', if ye on'y knew it. That man o' mine can't see fardher nor churches an' Or'nge Lodges, an' all the time there's men an' weemen stan'in' about, waitin' fur somethin' til bring them thegither.

MICHAEL. Aw, but selfishness is the curse o' the wurl'. An' it's the curse o' Irelan' more not anny other country. They wur alwis thinkin' o' theirselves, the men an weemen that might ha' saved Irelan'. Whiniver a man's come near deliverin' Irelan', a wumman 's stepped in an' destroyed him. It's alwis bin the way since the beginnin'. Alwis, alwis, alwis! There'll be no salvation fur Irelan' til a man is born that dussen care a God's curse fur weemen. They're hangin' about the neck o' the lan', draggin' her down.

MRS. RAINEY. Ye're blamin' us fur the follies o' men. Is Nora to blame acause my man's a fool?

RAINEY. A'm no fool. A must stick til the right. It's onnacherl fur a man an' a wumman til live in the same house an' worship in a differ'nt church.

MRS. RAINEY. Sure, if they can live in the same lan' they can live in the same house. It's on'y igner'nce an' wickedness an' men wi' foul tongues that makes it hard. John, ye'll be a good man, an' go til the Or'nge Hall the night, an' do yer best t' keep the peace.

RAINEY. A can't go.

HUGH. A'll go meself. A won't belave that the men o' Irelan' will let bigotry destroy them fur ivir.

MICHAEL. Ye can't go. Ye're not an Or'ngeman.

HUGH. A'll git in somehow. If A 've spoiled the work, A can mend it again.

MICHAEL. If ye had on'y waited awhile. In a week or two, it 'ud ha' bin all over, an' we'd ha' won. Aw, Mr. Rainey, can't ye think o' the danger o' losin' iv'rythin' be yer action? Ye run the risk o' perpetuatin' bigotry an' losin' all we've struck fur. Man, ye can't do the like o' that.

RAINEY. A'll do what ye want if he'll give her up. A wun't go anear the Or'nge Hall if he dussen.

HUGH. An' A wun't give her up, A tell ye.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, the wurl' is bein' destroyed be headstrong men. [*To* RAINEY.] Will ye go til the Lodge the night, an' lave this over fur a while. [*To* HUGH.] Ye'll promise not til marry her til after yer da's had time til think it over?

HUGH. Aye, A'll do that.

RAINEY. There 's nathin' til be thought over. He's determined til marry her, an' she's determined not til change her religion. There's nathin' more til be said. Ye'll git me t' go t' the Lodge the night ondher pretence that mebbe they'll change their min's, an' ye know as well as yer

livin', they won't. [*Pointing to* NORA.] Luk at that wumman's face. She manes til marry him.

MICHAEL. Wud ye sacrifice all the rest o' us fur them? That's what ye're doin', mind ye. There's a whole townfull o' us, an' ye'll let us go t' wreck an' ruin fur wan man an' a wumman.

MRS. RAINEY. Aye, indeed, ye're just as bad as they are.

RAINEY. Aye, ye'll all make me out in the wrong. Ye give me no credit a-tall. A'm on'y an obstinit ould man t' ye. Ye nivir think A'm in earnest about me religion.

TOM. A nivir knew bein' in earnest wus anny excuse fur makin' a fool o' yerself.

RAINEY. Hould yer tongue.

TOM. Naw, A wun't. A've bin putt upon long enough. Ye're an ould fool, that's what ye are; a damned ould fool.

RAINEY. Ye young scoundrel . . .

MRS. RAINEY. Tom, dear, don't ye think ye might go out fur a wee walk?

TOM. Naw, A don't want a wee walk. A'm alwis sent out fur a walk whin there's a bit o' bother. A'm a man the same as he is.

MICHAEL. Aw, Tom, don't make it anny worse nor it is.

MRS. RAINEY. Now, just sit down, the whole o' ye. Dear-a-dear, it's the quare hard work fur a wumman, keepin' men at peace. If there wussen the like o' us in the wurl' ye'd be kickin' wan another iv'ry five minits. Now, what are ye goin' t' do about it all? Are ye goin' t' the Lodge, John?

RAINEY. Naw, A'm not.

MRS. RAINEY. Is that yer last answer?

RAINEY. Aye, it is.

MRS. RAINEY. It's a quare pity o' ye. Ye'll be sorry fur this, A tell ye.

RAINEY. A can't help that.

MRS. RAINEY. Well, Mickie, an' what are you goin' t' do?

MICHAEL. A don't know. A'll have til think o' somethin'. A'm all throughover. What wi' the slap on the head an' this suddent trouble, A don't know what A'm doin'. A'm near broke wi' grief. A'm the one feels it most. A've dreamt o' this since A wus born, an' now it's near done, this comes an' destroys it. My God, Mrs. Rainey, what a wurl'.

MRS. RAINEY [*patting him on the back*]. Aw, keep yer heart up, Mickie. Mebbe, it'll be all right. A wish there wus Or'ngeweemen. A'd go meself in his place.

HUGH [*jumping up*]. A'm not an Or'ngeman, but A'll go. Hart issen nayther, an' if they'll let him in, they'll let me. A'll spake til them, an' putt a stop til Hart's nonsense. A'm the one'll do it. A'll not let it be said the peace o' Irelan' wus destroyed be the Raineys.

RAINEY. Aye, ye'll do a quare lot. Ye can't spake.

HUGH. A can spake as good as you.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, can't ye control yer tongues? Ye do too much spakin' atween ye. Ye're consated about yer spakin'.

HUGH. A've nivir spoke afore, but A'll spake the night. A will, A declare til God. A'll put a stap til bigotry.

RAINEY. Will ye tell them why A've refused til have annythin' more til do wi' it?

MRS. RAINEY. What wud he be doin' that fur?

RAINEY. Naw, iv coorse not. Ye'll desave them as ye desaved me. D' ye think anny good'll come out o' that?

HUGH. It's noan o' their business who A marry.

NORA. A can't ondherstan' why a man an' a wumman can't git married wi'out iv'ry wan goin' out o' their wits?

MRS. RAINEY. Och, they alwis do, dear. Sure, it's the way the wurl's made. Ye have t' putt up wi' it.

TOM. It's a funny soart o' wurl' then.

HUGH. A don't belave the Or'ngemen are such fools as ye make out. They're brave sensible men, a lot o' them, if they wur on'y let alone be them that's supposed t' be their betters.

RAINEY. Will ye tell them why?

HUGH. It's not necessary. It's nathin' t' do wi' it.

RAINEY. Then A'll go meself an' tell them. We'll see who can spake the best then?

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, ye cudden go out on a night like this. Sure, ye're gettin' ould.

RAINEY. Lave me alone, will ye! Ye're

all conspirin' agin me, but A'll bate ye yit. Gimme me coat, an' let me git out o' this.

MICHAEL. Ye'll have blood on yer han's, Mr. Rainey, if ye do that.

RAINEY. A don't care, A tell ye. A'll putt a stap t' this.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, give him his coat, an' let him go, the headstrong ould man.

HUGH. A'll be left whin he comes back.

TOM. Aye, an' so will I.

RAINEY [*to* MRS. RAINEY]. A suppose you'll be gone, too?

MRS. RAINEY. Naw, A think A'll be here. God help ye, ye'll need someone t' luk after ye.

RAINEY. Nathin'll stap me. A've made up me min'. Good-night t' ye. [*To* NORA.] Mebbe ye're satisfied, now, me fine girl?

MRS. RAINEY. Lave her alone. Are n't ye content wi' the bad work ye've done wi'out proddin' her wi' a knife? G' long wi' ye, an' do yer dirty work, an' don't stan' there hurtin' a girl that nivir done you no harm.

RAINEY. She tuk me son thrum me.

MRS. RAINEY. G' long wi' ye, an' make yer spache.

[RAINEY *stands for a moment irresolute, then goes out of the house quickly.* MICHAEL *covers his face with his hands. There is a silence, except for the sobbing of* NORA.]

TOM. A think A'll go out for a walk.

MRS. RAINEY. Aye, do, dear. [*Exit* TOM.]

MICHAEL. A'll go home.

MRS. RAINEY. Ye'll not let this upset ye, Mickie? Ye'll just go on tryin', wun't ye?

MICHAEL. It's the sore work, Mrs. Rainey.

MRS. RAINEY. Aye, but, sure, it 'ud be far sorer not til do it.

HUGH. A'm quare an' sorry, Mickie.

MICHAEL. It's a pity, Hughie. It's a quare pity.

HUGH. We'll not let this bate us.

NORA. No, we wun't. It's us now, that'll have til do the work. We'll all do it. A'll go an' talk til the men in the street, an' mebbe they'll listen til me. A'd 'a' given the wurl' if this hadden happened.

MICHAEL. It's the quare hard job til stap bigotry wance it's started. It runs like lightnin' an' them that tries til stap it has weights hangin' on them til keep them back. A'm afeard it's no good.

MRS. RAINEY. It'll be no good, if ye're afeard. Ye must keep yer heart up, that's the way o' the wurl'.

NORA. Aye, that's true. Good-night t' ye, Mrs. Rainey.

MRS. RAINEY [*pulling the girl close to her and kissing her very tenderly*]. Ye'll be a good wife til him, dear, wun't ye?

NORA. A will, indeed.

MRS. RAINEY. Good-night, dear. Good-night, Hughie. When ye want me, just run in.

HUGH. A'll come back whin A've got lodgin's fur me things.

MRS. RAINEY. A'll have them ready fur ye. Aw, dear, A wish ye wurn't goin'. [HUGH *puts his arms about her and hugs her tightly.*] God bless ye, dear.

MICHAEL. Whativir happens, Mrs. Rainey, A'm not sorry A knew you.

MRS. RAINEY. Ah, well, now, that's somethin' til be livin' fur. Sure, the best o' us can't do no more nor that.

MICHAEL. Good-night t' ye.

MRS. RAINEY. Come in in the mornin' an' A'll dress yer head fur ye.

MICHAEL. Aw, ye're brave an' kind. A cudden trouble ye.

MRS. RAINEY. Sure, it's no trouble a-tall. Good-night, Michael. Good-night, t' ye all.

HUGH. Good-night, ma.

[*Exeunt* HUGH, NORA, *and* MICHAEL.]

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, dear, it's a troublesome wurl'.

[*She draws her chair up to the fire and resumes her darning.*]

ACT IV

It is ten days later. The kitchen shows signs of unusual agitation on the part of the occupants. The window-shutters are closely barred, and the street door is well fastened. Outside is heard the noise of people shouting; occasionally a stone strikes the shutters or the door. MRS. RAINEY *and* NORA *are sitting*

by the fire. JOHN RAINEY *strides up and down the kitchen floor, without speaking. Now and then he stops and listens to the noise. A stone rattles on the window, and a loud voice is heard shouting, "Bring out the Fenians."*

MRS. RAINEY. Ye wud think they wur wil' savages thrum the heart o' Africa, the way they're goin' on.

NORA. Sure, they're just demented with rage, an' they don't know what they're doin'. [*Another stone strikes the shutters.*] A wondher how many stones they've clodded at the house the day?

MRS. RAINEY. Are them two upstairs all right?

NORA. A'll call up til them. [*She rises and passes in front of* RAINEY*; he ignores her. She calls up the stairs.*] Hughie, are ye all right?

HUGH [*calling from above*]. Aye, we're all right.

NORA. Ye'd better not be showin' yerself fur fear they clod a stone at ye.

[*The noise of breaking glass is heard.* NORA *runs up the stairs, crying out.*]

MRS. RAINEY [*going to the staircase*]. Come on down, the whole o' ye.

HUGH. Sure, we're all right. It's on'y the winda they've broke. The peelers are comin' now.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, thank God. Mebbe, they'll go away now?

[*She returns to her seat.*]

RAINEY. It's like the Day o' Judgment.

MRS. RAINEY. A'm quare an' sorry fur ye, John. It's not very pleasant til have the like o' this on yer mind.

RAINEY. A'm not ashamed o' anything A've done. A'd do it again. But it's tarrible all the same.

MRS. RAINEY. Yer conscience an' yer principles causes a great dale o' trouble til other people.

RAINEY. A don't repent, A tell ye. Ye think ye'll prove me in the wrong acause o' the riot, but A don't care if there wus fifty riots wan on the top o' the other, A'm right, an' A'd do it again.

MRS. RAINEY. It's quare t' think o' ye goin' down that night, an' stirrin' up strife. It wus a tarrible thing t' do, John. Ye made the quare lot o' bad blood that time. An' a lot o' it'll be spilt afore this is over. [*A volley of stones rattles on the shutters.*] Fur dear sake, d' ye hear that. Ye 'd think they had a grudge agin the windas, the way they're batterin' them.

[TOM *comes down stairs, hurriedly.*]

TOM. The peelers are goin' til charge them wi' their batons.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, God help us. There'll be broken heads in a minit or two.

[*Wilder cries are heard outside.*]

TOM. The end of it'll be we'll have to flit out o' this town. No wan'll ivir spake til us again. A met Geordie M'Cracken a day ago, an' he nivir as much as lukked at me. It was the quare cut.

MRS. RAINEY. Mebbe, he didden see ye!

TOM. Aw, he saw me all right. He passed me by as if he didden know me. Me an' him was chums thegither. . . . It's brave an' hard on me that nivir done nathin' til be losin' me frien's, acause me da won't have a Cathlik in the family. [*To his father.*] Mebbe, ye're sorry now fur what ye've done?

RAINEY. A'm not sorry fur nathin'.

TOM. Well, ye ought t' be then.

MRS. RAINEY. All right. Tom, ye needin' go on talkin' about it. Sure, there's things ye feel inside ye aven when ye won't let on til anny one else. Ye nivir know what's in a man's heart.

TOM. A'll go til Glasgow after this is over, or mebbe til Englan'. They don't make a lot o' damned fools o' themselves about religion over there.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, but mebbe, they have their own way o' bein' foolish! Ye nivir know.

[*The noise outside has grown wilder.*]

TOM [*going up the stairs again*]. There'll be some'll be sorry afore this day is done.

MRS. RAINEY. Och, aye, indeed there will. [*Exit* TOM.]

RAINEY. He's right, that lad; we'll have t' lave the town when it's over.

MRS. RAINEY. It's hard t' be lavin' the place ye wur born an' bred in when ye're ould.

RAINEY. Aye.

MRS. RAINEY. But A suppose ye're right?

RAINEY. A am.

MRS. RAINEY. Aye, ye alwis thought that. [*They do not speak to one another for a moment.*] Why don't ye make it up wi' Hughie an' Nora. Ye know they come here specially this mornin' til be frien's wi' ye. It issen their fault the riot broke out the day. Ye've not said a word til aythir o' them since they come in, though they're ready an' willin' til make it up.

RAINEY. They're not here be my will.

MRS. RAINEY. Naw, that's true. But, sure, it's no good houl'in' out agin what can't be helped. Ye might as well putt a kind face on ye as not. They'll be married in a wee while, an' A wudden like us to be bad frien's wi' them when they'll mebbe need us most. We're gettin' ould, John. It dussen become the ould to' be headstrong an' unforgivin'.

RAINEY. A have n't another word t' say about it. A've said all A've got t' say. A can say no more.

MRS. RAINEY. Ye can alwis putt in another word if ye want t', an' make it all different.

RAINEY. A don't want to.

MRS. RAINEY. God forgive ye fur a headstrong man, John.

RAINEY. That's atween Him an' me.

[HUGH *comes down the stairs.*]

HUGH. It's sickenin' t' be watchin' them. The peelers is batin' them over the heads wi' their batons. A wish t' God it wus over.

MRS. RAINEY. Are they stappin', d' ye think?

HUGH. Naw, they're not near stappin'. The peelers are n't enough.

[NORA *comes down quickly.*]

NORA. Aw, Hugh, there's a Cathlik crowd comin' down the street, an' the peelers is atween them. There'll be murdher in a minit.

[TOM *cries out from the room above,* "*Hi, Hughie, come up quick.*"]

HUGH. What is it?

TOM [*appearing at the head of the stairs*]. There's a lot o' Cathliks come an' Mickie 's at the head o' them.

RAINEY. Aw, A tould ye, didden A?

TOM. He's tryin' t' git them t' go away, but they're not takin' no notis o' him. A saw wan o' them hittin' him wi' a stick, an' shovin' him out o' the way.

MRS. RAINEY. It's no place that fur a man that manes well.

[HUGH *runs up the stairs quickly, followed by* NORA. MRS. RAINEY *waits a little while, and then goes after them.* RAINEY *is left alone in the kitchen. He sits down in front of the fire and stares steadily into it. The noise of the riot is now intense. After a little while,* TOM *comes to the head of the stairs and shouts to his father.*]

TOM. The sodgers are comin'. The peelers can't houl' out agin the crowd.

[RAINEY *does not reply.* TOM *goes back again. Above the murmur of the voices outside, the voice of* MICHAEL *is heard.*]

MICHAEL. Fur God's sake, boys, go home, or there'll be bloodshed.

[*There are loud shouts of* "*Fenian*" *and* "*To hell with the Pope,*" *and the noise of stones being thrown.* MRS. RAINEY *and* NORA *come back to the kitchen.*]

MRS. RAINEY. He'll be killed if he stan's there anny longer. A 've a good min' t' open the dure an' let him in.

RAINEY. Ye'll not let no more Cathliks in here.

MRS. RAINEY. What harm wud that do ye?

RAINEY. There's enough o' them here.

NORA. Ye'd better not open the dure. The crowd 'ud git in, an' dear on'y knows what they'd do.

[*The noise of tramping soldiers is heard, and an agitated voice reads monotonously outside the window.*]

NORA. What's that man doin'?

TOM [*from stairs*]. There's a magistrate outside readin' the Riot Act.

NORA. The Riot Act!

TOM. Aye, there'll be shootin' after that.

[*An officer's voice is heard giving commands.*]

MRS. RAINEY. They'll on'y use blank kertridges t' frighten them. Mebbe they'll go home now?

[*The Magistrate is heard calling upon the crowd to disperse. There is a roar of voices in reply. The Magistrate's voice is heard in a lull, shouting, "The soldiers will shoot if you don't go home quietly." There is a rattle of stones on the street, and much shouting. Then the officer is heard giving orders, and the noise of rifles being fired follows.*]

NORA. Aw, Holy Mother o' God, they're shootin'!

MRS. RAINEY. Dear, oh, dear, oh, dear!

HUGH [*from the top of the stairs*]. It's all right, ma, they just shot over their heads. There's no wan hurt. It's scared them a bit, an' some o' them is runnin' home.

MRS. RAINEY. Come on, down, Hugh, and bring Tom wi' ye. It's mebbe not safe up there.

HUGH. Aw, it's safe enough.

[*The uproar continues.*]

NORA [*who is slightly hysterical*]. No, don't go back again, Hugh. A'm afeard til death.

HUGH [*coming down the stairs and putting his arm round her*]. Sure, there's nathin' til be afeard o'. It'll be all over in a minit or two. [*More stones are thrown.*]

TOM [*from above*]. They've knocked a soldier senseless wi' a brick.

NORA. Aw, I know it'll be death til some. Don't go away thrum me. Me heart's in me mouth wi' fear.

HUGH. There now, ye're all right.

NORA. A've not bin the same since the men bate ye at the Custom House steps that day. . . . A lost me nerve when A saw them strikin' ye.

[RAINEY, *who still paces up and down the room, passes her, and she starts with terror.*]

HUGH. What ails ye?

NORA. It's nathin'. It wus like a shadow. . . . [*She sits down on the sofa, and pulls him down beside her.*] A'll be all right in a minit. On'y don't go away thrum me. A want ye near me. Aw, Hughie, Hughie, it wus our fault. We shud 'a' done what yer da wanted us t' do. We'll nivir know no peace after this day's work, but misery til we die. A'd give the wurl' if on'y A cud ondo it all.

HUGH. Ye mussen take on like that. Sure, it can't be helped.

RAINEY. It cud 'a' bin helped.

MRS. RAINEY. Ye wur all s' headstrong.

NORA. A wish A cud putt things back again. Is there nathin' we can do?

RAINEY. There's nathin' til be done. It's too late.

NORA. There'll be men killed, an' weemen weepin'. It wus our fault. It's us they shud be shootin' an' not them.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, dear, hould yer tongue. Ye mussen say the like o' that. [*She puts her arms round* NORA.] Sure, don't be cryin' like that. It's not your fault the wurl 's like it is.

NORA. A can't help thinkin' it's me's t' blame. Ye min' what Michael said about men bein' ruined be weemen . . .

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, sure, men alwis putts the blame on us whativir happens.

NORA. If A cud stap it A woud do annything at all. Mebbe, if A wus til go out til them, an' tell them it was my fault, they'd go home! . . .

HUGH. Och, Nora, dear, don't be talkin' wil'ly. Ye're not near yerself.

[*The uproar continues, and, after the word of command is given, the rifles are fired again.*]

NORA. Aw, they're shootin' again. Don't let them, don't let them.

TOM [*from the top of the stairs*]. It's all right. They've not hit annyone. They're on'y tryin' to frighten them. It's blank kertridges they're usin'. A wish t' me goodness, Mickie 'ud go on home. They're throwin' stones at him as well as the soldiers.

MRS. RAINEY. Try and sign til him to go away.

TOM. A'll try, but sure he'll not see me, and not heed me if he does.

[*He goes back into the room.*]

HUGH. A wish we cud get him in here.

MRS. RAINEY. Yer da says he'll not let him in.

HUGH. Da, ye'll not keep it up anny longer, will ye?

RAINEY. A don't know ye. Ye're a stranger in this house. You an' that wumman. [*He points to* NORA.]

HUGH. A day like this, da, is no time fur ill-feelin'.

RAINEY. There can be nathin' else on a day when men clod stones at my dure. D' ye hear that? Clod stones at my dure. There nivir wus the like o' that done til me afore.

HUGH. Well, it can't be helped now.

RAINEY. Ye can't get out o' yer punishment that way. Yer reward's outside: men mad wi' rage, an' sodgers shootin' them down.

HUGH [*with rising anger*]. An' whose fault is that? There wudda bin noan o' this if ye hadden bin so headstrong and bigoted.

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, don't begin it all over again.

NORA. Yer da's right, Hugh. It's me's t' blame. Ye wud 'a' given me up if A'd 'a' let ye. A'll nivir be happy again wi' this on me min'.

HUGH. Ye'll be all right, dear. Sure, we'll go away . . .

NORA. Ye can't go away thrum yerself. A wish A cud die.

MRS. RAINEY. Fur dear sake, Nora, pull yerself thegither. It's no way t' be goin' on, that. There's a dale t' be thought o', an' ye'll need all yer wits about it.

NORA. If A wus t' die mebbe it wud putt things right?

HUGH. What's the good o' talkin' about dyin'? It'll be time enough t' do that when ye're ould.

RAINEY. If ye'd thought o' this afore ye done what ye did . . .

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, if we'd all thought o' this afore we done what we did . . . Sure, stap talkin'. We're all makin' excuses for wurselves, an' Mickie's outside tryin' t' make pace. Fur shame.

[*The uproar still continues and the voice of the officer is heard calling on the people to disperse. He threatens to use ball-cartridges if they do not do so.*]

TOM [*coming to the top of the stairs*]. Hugh, they're goin' to shoot in earnest now. A heerd the officer sayin' they wud if the crowd wudden go home. Holy smoke! Somebuddy'll be shot dead. Michael's runnin' about wi' blood streamin' down his face, tellin' the men t' go home, an' whinivir he says a word til wan o' them, they strack him in the face. Aw, it's awful the way they're goin' on, it is, indeed.

NORA. Aw, Mickie'll be shot. Ye'll not let them shoot him, Hugh! He's done nathin'. It wus us, it wus us. They can shoot me if they like.

MRS. RAINEY. Ye'd better bring him in, Hugh. God save us all, will this day nivir end?

RAINEY. It'll end when it's too late.

[HUGH *goes to the door and opens it. The uproar is horrible; stones are thrown at him.*]

HUGH. Hi, Michael, fur God's sake come on in er that, or ye'll be killed. [*Loud cries of "Come out, ye Fenian ye," and "Down wi' Popery."*] Come on, Michael! [*The officer speaks again, "For Heaven's sake, men, go home, or I'll order the soldiers to fire on you." A wild volley of stones is the reply of the crowd. The officer shouts to his men, "Present arms!"*] Aw, God save us, they're goin' t' shoot now. Michael, ye fool, come on in, or they'll kill ye.

NORA. What d' ye say? They're not goin' t' shoot in earnest, are they?

HUGH [*coming back to the kitchen, and covering his face with his hands*]. Aye, they are.

NORA [*starts up*]. They mussent shoot the people down. [*The officer speaks again, "For the last time, men, will you go home? I don't want to order the soldiers to shoot." Again the crowd yells with rage, and throws stones at the soldiers.*] No, no, no, don't shoot them! It wus my fault, A tell ye. Stap, stap. [*She runs into the street.*] Stap, stap, it wus me! . . .

[*As she rushes into the street, the soldiers fire. She is seen to stagger a little, and look up suddenly, as one does in amazement. She cries, "Aw, Hughie, A'm shot!" and tries to catch the lintel of the door, but falls across the porch. The soldiers are heard charging the mob.*]

MRS. RAINEY. Aw, what's happened, what's happened?

HUGH [*running to* NORA, *and catching her up in his arms*]. Nora, Nora, what's happened ye? My God, they've murdhered her. [MICHAEL *appears in the doorway.*]

MICHAEL. What did ye let her out fur? Tom, Tom, come quick an' help us wi' her.

TOM. A knew somethin' like this wud happen. [*To his father.*] Mebbe, ye're satisfied now.

MICHAEL. Run fur a doctor, will ye?

[TOM *goes out of the house quickly. A surly noise continues outside, now rising, now falling. A policeman appears in the doorway, and some of the neighbours.* HUGH *and* MICHAEL *lift* NORA *in their arms, and carry her to the sofa. The policeman enters with them, shutting the street door behind him.*]

HUGH. Nora, ye're all right, are n't ye? Aw, spake t' me, wumman.

NORA [*feebly*]. Don't be cryin', Hugh. It wus right t' shoot me. It wus my fault. A'm quaren glad.

RAINEY [*as if dreaming*]. A wus right. A know A wus right.

MRS. RAINEY [*weeping a little, and patting him gently*]. Aw, my poor man, my poor man.

KING ARGIMENES AND THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

By LORD DUNSANY

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PERSONS

KING ARGIMENES
ZARB, *a slave born of slaves*
AN OLD SLAVE
A YOUNG SLAVE
SLAVES
} *Slaves of King Darniak*

KING DARNIAK
THE KING'S OVERSEER
A PROPHET
THE IDOL-GUARD
THE SERVANT OF THE KING'S DOG

QUEEN ATHARLIA
QUEEN OXARA
QUEEN CAHAFRA
QUEEN THRAGOLIND
} *Queens of King Darniak*

GUARDS AND ATTENDANTS

Time: A long time ago

KING ARGIMENES AND THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

THE FIRST ACT

The dinner-hour on the slave-fields of KING DARNIAK. KING ARGIMENES *is sitting upon the ground, bowed, ragged and dirty, gnawing a bone. He has uncouth hair and a dishevelled beard. A battered spade lies near him. Two or three slaves sit at back of stage eating raw cabbage-leaves. The tear-song, the chant of the low-born, rises at intervals, monotonous and mournful, coming from distant slave-fields.*

KING ARGIMENES. This is a good bone; there is juice in this bone.

ZARB. I wish I were you, Argimenes.

KING ARGIMENES. I am not to be envied any longer. I have eaten up my bone.

ZARB. I wish I were you, because you have been a king. Because men have prostrated themselves before your feet. Because you have ridden a horse and worn a crown and have been called Majesty.

KING ARGIMENES. When I remember that I have been a king it is very terrible.

ZARB. But you are lucky to have such things in your memory as you have. I have nothing in my memory — Once I went for a year without being flogged, and I remember my cleverness in contriving it — I have nothing else to remember.

KING ARGIMENES. It is very terrible to have been a king.

ZARB. But we have nothing who have no good memories in the past. It is not easy for us to hope for the future here.

KING ARGIMENES. Have you any god?

ZARB. We may not have a god because he might make us brave and we might kill our guards. He might make a miracle and give us swords.

KING ARGIMENES. Ah, you have no hope, then.

ZARB. I have a little hope. Hush, and I will tell you a secret — The King's great dog is ill and like to die. They will throw him to us. We shall have beautiful bones then.

KING ARGIMENES. Ah! Bones.

ZARB. Yes. That is what *I* hope for. And have *you* no other hope? Do you not hope that your nation will arise some day and rescue you and cast off the king and hang him up by his thumbs from the palace gateway?

KING ARGIMENES. No. I have no other hope, for my god was cast down in the temple and broken into three pieces on the day that they surprised us and took me sleeping. But will they throw him to us? Will so honorable a brute as the King's dog be thrown to us?

ZARB. When he is dead his honors are taken away. Even the King when he is dead is given to the worms. Then why should not his dog be thrown to us?

KING ARGIMENES. We are not worms!

ZARB. You do not understand, Argimenes. The worms are little and free, while we are big and enslaved. I did not say we were worms, but we are *like* worms, and if they have the King when he is dead, why then —

KING ARGIMENES. Tell me more of the King's dog. Are there big bones on him?

ZARB. Ay, he is a big dog — a high, big, black one.

KING ARGIMENES. You know him then?

ZARB. Oh, yes, I know him. I know him well. I was beaten once because of him, twenty-five strokes from the treble whips, two men beating me.

KING ARGIMENES. How did they beat you because of the King's dog?

ZARB. They beat me because I spoke to

him without making obeisance. He was coming dancing alone over the slave-fields and I spoke to him. He was a friendly great dog, and I spoke to him and patted his head, and did not make obeisance.

KING ARGIMENES. And they saw you do it?

ZARB. Yes, the slave-guard saw me. They came and seized me at once and bound my arms. The great dog wanted me to speak to him again, but I was hurried away.

KING ARGIMENES. You should have made obeisance.

ZARB. The great dog seemed so friendly that I forgot he was the King's great dog.

KING ARGIMENES. But tell me more. Was he hurt or is it a sickness?

ZARB. They say that it is a sickness.

KING ARGIMENES. Ah, then he will grow thin if he does not die soon. If it had been a hurt! — but we should not complain. I complain more often than you do because I had not learned to submit while I was yet young.

ZARB. If your beautiful memories do not please you, you should hope more. I wish I had your memories. I should not trouble to hope then. It is very hard to hope.

KING ARGIMENES. There will be nothing more to hope for when we have eaten the King's dog.

ZARB. Why, you might find gold in the earth while you were digging. Then you might bribe the commander of the guard to lend you his sword; we would all follow you if you had a sword. Then we might take the King and bind him and lay him on the ground and fasten his tongue outside his mouth with thorns and put honey on it and sprinkle honey near. Then the gray ants would come from one of their big mounds. My father found gold once when he was digging.

KING ARGIMENES [*pointedly*]. Did your father free himself?

ZARB. No. Because the King's Overseer found him looking at the gold and killed him. But he would have freed himself if he could have bribed the guard.

[A PROPHET *walks across the stage attended by two guards.*]

SLAVES. He is going to the King. He is going to the King.

ZARB. He is going to the King.

KING ARGIMENES. Going to prophesy good things to the King. It is easy to prophesy good things to a king, and be rewarded when the good things come. What else should come to a king? A prophet! A prophet!

[*A deep bell tolls slowly.* KING ARGIMENES *and* ZARB *pick up their spades at once, and the old slaves at the back of the stage go down on their knees immediately and grub in the soil with their hands. The white beard of the oldest trails in the dirt as he works.* KING ARGIMENES *digs.*]

KING ARGIMENES. What is the name of that song that we always sing? I like the song.

ZARB. It has no name. It is our song. There is no other song.

KING ARGIMENES. Once there were other songs. Has this no name?

ZARB. I think the soldiers have a name for it.

KING ARGIMENES. What do the soldiers call it?

ZARB. The soldiers call it the tear-song, the chant of the low-born.

KING ARGIMENES. It is a good song. I could sing no other now.

[ZARB *moves away digging.*]

KING ARGIMENES [*to himself as his spade touches something in the earth*]. Metal! *Feels with his spade again.*] Gold perhaps! — It is of no use here. [*Uncovers earth leisurely. Suddenly he drops on his knees and works excitedly in the earth with his hands. Then very slowly, still kneeling, he lifts, lying flat on his hands, a long greenish sword, his eyes intent on it. About the level of his uplifted forehead he holds it, still flat on both hands, and addresses it thus.*] O holy and blessed thing! [*Then he lowers it slowly till his hands rest on his knees, and looking all the while at the sword, loquitur.*] Three years ago to-morrow King Darniak spat at me, having taken my kingdom from me. Three times in that year I was flogged, with twelve stripes, with seventeen stripes, and with

twenty stripes. A year and eleven months ago, come Moon-day, the King's Overseer struck me in the face, and nine times in that year he called me dog. For one month two weeks and a day I was yoked with a bullock and pulled a rounded stone all day over the paths, except while we were fed. I was flogged twice that year — with eighteen stripes and with ten stripes. This year the roof of the slave-sty has fallen in and King Darniak will not repair it. Five weeks ago one of his Queens laughed at me as she came across the slave-fields. I was flogged again this year and with thirteen stripes, and twelve times they have called me dog. And these things they have done to a king, and a king of the House of Ithara.

[*He listens attentively for a moment, then buries the sword again and pats the earth over it with his hands, then digs again.*]

[*The old* SLAVES *do not see him: their faces are to the earth. Enter the* KING'S OVERSEER *carrying a whip. The* SLAVES *and* KING ARGIMENES *kneel with their foreheads to the ground as he passes across the stage. Exit the* KING'S OVERSEER.]

KING ARGIMENES [*kneeling, hands outspread downward*]. O warrior spirit, wherever thou wanderest, whoever be thy gods, whether they punish thee or whether they bless thee, O kingly spirit, that once laid here this sword, behold, I pray to thee, having no gods to pray to, for the god of my nation was broken in three by night. Mine arm is stiff with three years' slavery, and remembers not the sword. But guide thy sword till I have slain six men and armed the strongest slaves, and thou shalt have the sacrifice every year of a hundred goodly oxen. And I will build in Ithara a temple to thy memory wherein all that enter in shall remember thee; so shalt thou be honored and envied among the dead, for the dead are very jealous of remembrance. Ay, though thou wert a robber that took men's lives unrighteously, yet shall rare spices smoulder in thy temple and little maidens sing and new-plucked flowers deck the solemn aisles; and priests shall go about it ringing bells that thy soul shall find repose. Oh, but it has a good blade, this old green sword; thou wouldst not like to see it miss its mark (if the dead see at all, as wise men teach), thou wouldst not like to see it go thirsting into the air; so huge a sword should find its marrowy bone. [*Extending his right hand upward.*] Come into my right arm, O ancient spirit, O unknown warrior's soul! And if thou hast the ear of any gods, speak there against Illuriel, god of King Darniak.

[*He rises and goes on digging.*]

THE KING'S OVERSEER [*reëntering*]. So you have been praying.

KING ARGIMENES [*kneeling*]. No, master.

THE KING'S OVERSEER. The slave-guard saw you. [*Strikes him.*] It is not lawful for a slave to pray.

KING ARGIMENES. I did but pray to Illuriel to make me a good slave, to teach me to dig well and to pull the rounded stone and to make me not to die when the food is scarce, but to be a good slave to my master the great King.

THE KING'S OVERSEER. Who art thou to pray to Illuriel? Dogs may not pray to an immortal god. [*Exit.*]

[ZARB *comes back, digging.*]

KING ARGIMENES [*digging*]. Zarb!

ZARB [*also digging*]. Do not look at me when you speak. The guards are watching us. Look at your digging.

KING ARGIMENES. How do the guards know we are speaking because we look at one another?

ZARB. You are very witless. Of course they know.

KING ARGIMENES. Zarb!

ZARB. What is it?

KING ARGIMENES. How many guards are there in sight?

ZARB. There are six of them over there. They are watching us.

KING ARGIMENES. Are there other guards in sight of these six guards?

ZARB. No.

KING ARGIMENES. How do you know?

ZARB. Because whenever their officer leaves them they sit upon the ground and play with dice.

KING ARGIMENES. How does that show that there are not another six in sight of them?

ZARB. How witless you are, Argimenes! Of course it shows there are not. Because, if there were, another officer would see them, and their thumbs would be cut off.

KING ARGIMENES. Ah! [*A pause.*] Zarb! [*A pause.*] Would the slaves follow me if I tried to kill the guards?

ZARB. No, Argimenes.

KING ARGIMENES. Why would they not follow me?

ZARB. Because you look like a slave. They will never follow a slave, because they are slaves themselves, and know how mean a creature is a slave. If you looked like a king they would follow you.

KING ARGIMENES. But I am a king. They know that I am a king.

ZARB. It is better to look like a king. It is looks that they would go by.

KING ARGIMENES. If I had a sword would they follow me? A beautiful huge sword of bronze.

ZARB. I wish I could think of things like that. It is because you were once a king that you can think of a sword of bronze. I tried to hope once that I should some day fight the guards, but I could n't picture a sword, I could n't imagine it; I could only picture whips.

KING ARGIMENES. Dig a little nearer, Zarb. [*They both edge closer.*] I have found a very old sword in the earth. It is not a sword such as common soldiers wear. A king must have worn it, and an angry king. It must have done fearful things; there are little dints in it. Perhaps there was a battle here long ago where all were slain, and perhaps that king died last and buried his sword, but the great birds swallowed him.

ZARB. You have been thinking too much of the King's dog, Argimenes, and that has made you hungry, and hunger has driven you mad.

KING ARGIMENES. I *have* found such a sword. [*A pause.*]

ZARB. Why — then you will wear a purple cloak again, and sit on a great throne, and ride a prancing horse, and we shall call you Majesty.

KING ARGIMENES. I shall break a long fast first and drink much water, and sleep. But will the slaves follow me?

ZARB. You will *make* them follow you if you have a sword. Yet is Illuriel a very potent god. They say that none have prevailed against King Darniak's dynasty so long as Illuriel stood. Once an enemy cast Illuriel into the river and overthrew the dynasty, but a fisherman found him again and set him up, and the enemy was driven out and the dynasty returned.

KING ARGIMENES. If Illuriel could be cast down as my god was cast down perhaps King Darniak could be overcome as I was overcome in my sleep?

ZARB. If Illuriel were cast down all the people would utter a cry and flee away. It would be a fearful portent.

KING ARGIMENES. How many men are there in the armory at the palace?

ZARB. There are ten men in the palace armory when all the slave-guards are out.

[*They dig awhile in silence.*]

ZARB. The officer of the slave-guard has gone away — They are playing with dice now. [*He throws down his spade and stretches his arms.*] The man with the big beard has won again, he is very nimble with his thumbs — They are playing again, but it is getting dark, I cannot clearly see.

[KING ARGIMENES *furtively uncovers the sword, he picks it up and grips it in his hand.*]

ZARB. Majesty!

[KING ARGIMENES *crouches and steals away towards the slave-guard.*]

. . . . . .

ZARB [*to the other slaves*]. Argimenes has found a terrible sword and has gone to slay the slave-guard. It is not a common sword, it is some king's sword.

AN OLD SLAVE. Argimenes will be dreadfully flogged. We shall hear him cry all night. His cries will frighten us, and we shall not sleep.

ZARB. No, no! The guards flog poor slaves, but Argimenes had an angry look. The guards will be afraid when they see him look so angry and see his terrible sword. It was a huge sword, and he looked very

angry. He will bring us the swords of the slave-guard. We must prostrate ourselves before him and kiss his feet or he will be angry with us too.

OLD SLAVE. Will Argimenes give me a sword?

ZARB. He will have swords for six of us if he slays the slave-guard. Yes, he will give you a sword.

SLAVE. A sword! No, no, I must not; the King would kill me if he found that I had a sword.

SECOND SLAVE [*slowly, as one who develops an idea*]. If the King found that I had a sword, why, then it would be an evil day for the King. [*They all look off left.*]

ZARB. I think that they are playing at dice again.

FIRST SLAVE. I do not see Argimenes.

ZARB. No, because he was crouching as he walked. The slave-guard is on the sky-line.

SECOND SLAVE. What is that dark shadow behind the slave-guard?

ZARB. It is too still to be Argimenes.

SECOND SLAVE. Look! It moves.

ZARB. The evening is too dark, I cannot see.

[*They continue to gaze into the gathering darkness. They raise themselves on their knees and crane their necks. Nobody speaks. Then from their lips and from others farther off goes up a long, deep "Oh!" It is like the sound that goes up from the grandstand when a horse falls at a fence, or, in England, like the first exclamation of the crowd at a great cricket match when a man is caught in the slips.*]

CURTAIN

THE SECOND ACT

The Throne Hall of KING DARNIAK. *The* KING *is seated on his throne in the centre at the back of the stage; a little to his left, but standing out from the wall, a dark-green seated idol is set up. His* QUEENS *are seated about him on the ground, two on his right and two between him and the idol. All wear crowns. Beside the dark-green idol a soldier with a pike is kneeling upon one knee. The tear-song, the chant of the low-born, drifts faintly up from the slave-fields.*

FIRST QUEEN. Do show us the new prophet, Majesty; it would be very interesting to see another prophet.

THE KING. Ah, yes. [*He strikes upon a gong, and an Attendant enters, walks straight past the* KING *and bows before the idol; he then walks back to the centre of the stage and bows before the* KING.] Bring the new prophet hither. [*Exit Attendant.*]

[*Enter the* KING'S OVERSEER *holding a roll of paper. He passes the* KING, *bows to the idol, returns to the front of the* KING, *kneels, and remains kneeling with bended head.*]

THE KING [*speaking in the meanwhile to the* SECOND QUEEN *on his immediate right*]. We are making a beautiful arbor for you, O Atharlia, at an end of the great garden. There shall be iris-flowers that you love and all things that grow by streams. And the stream there shall be small and winding like one of those in your country. I shall bring a stream a new way from the mountains. [*Turning to* QUEEN OXARA *on his extreme right.*] And for you, too, O Oxara, we shall make a pleasance. I shall have rocks brought from the quarries for you, and my idle slaves shall make a hill and plant it with mountain shrubs, and you can sit there in the winter thinking of the North. [*To the kneeling* OVERSEER.] Ah, what is here?

THE KING'S OVERSEER. The plans of your royal garden, Majesty. The slaves have dug it for five years and rolled the paths.

THE KING [*takes the plans*]. Was there not a garden in Babylon?

THE KING'S OVERSEER. They say there was a garden there of some sort, Majesty.

THE KING. I will have a greater garden. Let the world know and wonder.

[*Looks at the plans.*]

THE KING'S OVERSEER. It shall know at once, Majesty.

THE KING [*pointing at the plan*]. I do not like that hill, it is too steep.

THE KING'S OVERSEER. No, Majesty.

THE KING. Remove it.

THE KING'S OVERSEER. Yes, Majesty.

THE KING. When will the garden be ready for the Queens to walk in?

THE KING'S OVERSEER. Work is slow, Majesty, at this season of the year because the green stuff is scarce and the slaves grow idle. They even become insolent and ask for bones.

QUEEN CAHAFRA [*to the* KING'S OVERSEER]. Then *why* are they not flogged? [*To* QUEEN THRAGOLIND.] It is so simple, they *only* have to flog them, but these people are so silly sometimes. I want to walk in the great garden, and then they tell me: "It is not ready, Majesty. It is not ready, Majesty," as though there were any reason why it should *not* be ready.

FOURTH QUEEN. Yes, they are a great trouble to us.

[*Meanwhile the* KING *hands back the plans. Exit the* KING'S OVERSEER.]

[*Reënter Attendant with the* PROPHET, *who is dressed in a long dark-brown cloak; his face is solemn; he has a long dark beard and long hair. Having bowed before the idol, he bows before the* KING *and stands silent. The Attendant, having bowed to both, stands by the doorway.*]

THE KING [*meanwhile to* QUEEN ATHARLIA]. Perhaps we shall lure the ducks when the marshes are frozen to come and swim in your stream; it will be like your own country. [*To the* PROPHET.] Prophesy unto us.

THE PROPHET [*speaks at once in a loud voice*]. There was once a King that had slaves to hate him and to toil for him, and he had soldiers to guard him and to die for him. And the number of the slaves that he had to hate him and to toil for him was greater than the number of the soldiers that he had to guard him and to die for him. And the days of that King were few. And the number of thy slaves, O King, that thou hast to hate thee is greater than the number of thy soldiers.

QUEEN CAHAFRA [*to* QUEEN THRAGOLIND]. —and I wore the crown with the sapphires and the big emerald in it, and the foreign prince said that I looked very sweet.

[*The* KING *who has been smiling at* ATHARLIA, *gives a gracious nod to the* PROPHET *when he hears him stop speaking. When the* QUEENS *see the* KING *nod graciously, they applaud the* PROPHET *by idly clapping their hands.*]

THIRD QUEEN. Do ask him to make us another prophecy, Majesty! He is so interesting. He looks so clever.

THE KING. Prophesy unto us.

THE PROPHET. Thine armies camped upon thy mountainous borders descry no enemy in the plains afar. And within thy gates lurks he for whom thy sentinels seek upon lonely guarded frontiers. There is a fear upon me and a boding. Even yet there is time, even yet; but *little* time. And my mind is dark with trouble for thy kingdom.

QUEEN CAHAFRA [*to* QUEEN THRAGOLIND]. I do not like the way he does his hair.

QUEEN THRAGOLIND. It would be all right if he would only have it cut.

THE KING [*to the* PROPHET, *dismissing him with a nod of the head*]. Thank you, that has been very interesting.

QUEEN THRAGOLIND. How clever he is! I wonder how he thinks of things like that?

QUEEN CAHAFRA. Yes, but I hate a man who is conceited about it. Look how he wears his hair.

QUEEN THRAGOLIND. Yes, of course, it is perfectly dreadful.

QUEEN CAHAFRA. Why can't he wear his hair like other people, even if he does say clever things?

QUEEN THRAGOLIND. Yes, I hate a conceited man.[1]

[*Enter an* ATTENDANT. *He bows before the idol, then kneels to the* KING.]

THE ATTENDANT. The guests are all assembled in the Chamber of Banquets.

[*All rise. The* QUEENS *walk two abreast to the Chamber of Banquets.*]

QUEEN ATHARLIA [*to* QUEEN OXARA]. What was he talking about?

[1] It is not necessary for the prophet's hair to be at all unusual.

QUEEN OXARA. He was talking about the armies on the frontier.

QUEEN ATHARLIA. Ah! That reminds me of that young captain in the Purple Guard. They say that he loves Linoora.

QUEEN OXARA. Oh, Thearkos! Linoora probably said that.

[*When the* QUEENS *come to the doorway they halt on each side of it. Then they turn facing one another. Then the* KING *leaves his throne and passes between them into the Chamber of Banquets, each couple courtesying low to him as he passes. The* QUEENS *follow, then the attendants. There rises the wine-song, the chant of the nobles, drowning the chant of the low-born. Only the* IDOL-GUARD *remains behind, still kneeling beside* ILLURIEL.]

THE IDOL-GUARD. I do not like those things the Prophet said — It would be terrible if they were true. It would be very terrible if they were false, for he prophesies in the name of Illuriel. Ah! They are singing the wine-song, the chant of the nobles. The Queens are singing. How merry they are! I should like to be a noble and sit and look at the Queens. [*He joins in the song.*]

THE VOICE OF A SENTINEL. Guard, turn out. [*The wine-song still continues.*]

THE VOICE OF ONE HAVING AUTHORITY. Turn out the guard there! Wake up, you accursed pigs!

[*Still the wine-song. A faint sound as of swords.*]

A VOICE CRYING. To the armory! To the armory! Reinforce! The Slaves have come to the armory. Ah! mercy!

[*For awhile there is silence.*]

KING ARGIMENES [*in the doorway*]. Go you to the slave-fields. Say that the palace-guard is dead and that we have taken the armory. Ten of you, hold the armory till our men come from the slave-fields. [*He comes into the hall with his slaves armed with swords.*] Throw down Illuriel.

THE IDOL-GUARD. You must take my life before you touch my god.

A SLAVE. We only want your pike.

[*All attack him; they seize his sword and bind his hands behind him. They all pull down Illuriel, the dark-green idol, who breaks into seven pieces.*]

KING ARGIMENES. Illuriel is fallen and broken asunder.

ZARB [*with some awe*]. Immortal Illuriel is dead at last.

KING ARGIMENES. My god was broken into three pieces, but Illuriel is broken into seven. The fortunes of Darniak will prevail over mine no longer. [*A slave breaks off a golden arm from the throne.*] Come, we will arm all the slaves. [*Exeunt.*]

KING DARNIAK [*enters with retinue*]. My throne is broken. Illuriel is turned against me.

AN ATTENDANT. Illuriel is fallen.

ALL [*with* KING DARNIAK]. Illuriel is fallen, is fallen. [*Some drop their spears.*]

KING DARNIAK [*to the* IDOL-GUARD]. What envious god or sacrilegious man has dared to do this thing?

THE IDOL-GUARD. Illuriel is fallen.

KING DARNIAK. Have men been here?

THE IDOL-GUARD. Is fallen.

KING DARNIAK. What way did they go?

THE IDOL-GUARD. Illuriel is fallen.

KING DARNIAK. They shall be tortured here before Illuriel, and their eyes shall be hung on a thread about his neck, so that Illuriel shall see it, and on their bones we will set him up again. Come!

[*Those that have dropped their spears pick them up, but trail them suddenly behind them on the ground. All follow dejectedly.*]

VOICES OF LAMENTATION [*growing fainter and fainter off*]. Illuriel is fallen, Illuriel is fallen. Illuriel, Illuriel, Illuriel, Illuriel. Is fallen. Is fallen. [*The song of the low-born ceases suddenly. Then voices of the slaves in the slave-fields chanting very loudly.*] Illuriel is fallen, is fallen, is fallen. Illuriel is fallen and broken asunder. Illuriel is fallen, fallen, fallen.

[*Clamor of fighting is heard, the clash of swords, and voices, and now and then the name of Illuriel.*]

THE IDOL-GUARD [*kneeling over a fragment of Illuriel*]. Illuriel is broken. They have overthrown Illuriel. They have done

great harm to the courses of the stars. The moon will be turned to blackness or fall and forsake the nights. The sun will rise no more. They do not know how they have wrecked the world.

[*Reënter* KING ARGIMENES *and his men.*]

KING ARGIMENES [*in the doorway*]. Go you to the land of Ithara and tell them that I am free. And do you go to the army on the frontier. Offer them death, or the right arm of the throne, to be melted and divided amongst them all. Let them choose.

[*The armed slaves go to the throne and stand on each side of it, loquitur, "Majesty, ascend your throne."*]

KING ARGIMENES [*standing with his face toward the audience, lifts the sword slowly, lying on both his hands, a little above his head, then looking up at it, loquitur*]. Praise to the unknown warrior, and to all gods that bless him. [*He ascends the throne.* ZARB *prostrates himself at the foot of it and remains prostrated for the rest of the Act, muttering at intervals "Majesty." An armed slave enters dragging the* KING'S OVERSEER. KING ARGIMENES *sternly watches him. He is dragged before the Throne. He still has the roll of parchment in his hand. For some moments* KING ARGIMENES *does not speak. Then pointing at the parchment.*] What have you there?

THE KING'S OVERSEER [*kneeling*]. It is a plan of the great garden, Majesty. It was to have been a wonder to the world.

[*Unfolds it.*]

KING ARGIMENES [*grimly*]. Show me the place that I digged for three years. [*The* KING'S OVERSEER *shows it with trembling hands; the parchment shakes visibly.*] Let there be built there a temple to an Unknown Warrior. And let this sword be laid on its altar evermore, that the ghost of that Warrior wandering by night (if men do walk by night from across the grave) may see his sword again. And let slaves be allowed to pray there and those that are oppressed; nevertheless the noble and the mighty shall not fail to repair there too, that the Unknown Warrior shall not lack due reverence.

[*Enter, running, a* MAN *of the household of* KING DARNIAK. *He starts and stares aghast on seeing* KING ARGIMENES.]

KING ARGIMENES. Who are you?

MAN. I am the servant of the King's dog.

KING ARGIMENES. Why do you come here?

MAN. The King's dog is dead.

KING ARGIMENES AND HIS MEN [*savagely and hungrily*]. Bones!

KING ARGIMENES [*remembering suddenly what has happened and where he is*]. Let him be buried with the late King.

ZARB [*in a voice of protest*]. Majesty!

CURTAIN

THE EASIEST WAY

AN AMERICAN PLAY CONCERNING A PARTICULAR PHASE OF NEW YORK LIFE

IN FOUR ACTS AND FOUR SCENES

By EUGENE WALTER

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CHARACTERS

Laura Murdock
Elfie St. Clair
Annie
Willard Brockton
John Madison
Jim Weston

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

Laura Murdock, twenty-five years of age, is a type not uncommon in the theatrical life of New York, and one which has grown in importance in the profession since the business of giving public entertainments has been so reduced to a commercial basis.

At an early age she came from Australia to San Francisco. She possessed a considerable beauty and an aptitude for theatrical accomplishment which soon raised her to a position of more or less importance in a local stock company playing in that city. A woman of intense superficial emotions, her imagination was without any enduring depths, but for the passing time she could place herself in an attitude of great affection and devotion. Sensually, the woman had marked characteristics, and with the flattery that surrounded her she soon became a favorite in the select circles who made such places as "The Poodle Dog" and "Zinkland's" famous. In general dissipation she was always careful not in any way to indulge in excesses which would jeopardize her physical attractiveness or for one moment diminish her sense of keen worldly calculation.

In time she married. It was, of course, a failure. Her vacillating nature was such that she could not be absolutely true to the man to whom she had given her life, and, after several bitter experiences, she had the horror of seeing him kill himself in front of her. There was a momentary spasm of grief, a tidal wave of remorse, and then the peculiar recuperation of spirits, beauty and attractiveness that so marks this type of woman. She was deceived by other men in many various ways and finally came to that stage of life that is known in theatrical circles as being "wised up."

At nineteen, the attention of a prominent theatrical manager being called to her, she took an important part in a New York production and immediately gained considerable reputation. The fact that before reaching the age of womanhood she had had more escapades than most women have in their entire lives was not generally known in New York, nor was there a mark upon her face or a single coarse mannerism to betray it. She was soft-voiced, very pretty, very girlish. Her keen sense of worldly calculation led her to believe that in order to progress in her theatrical career she must have some influence outside of her art and dramatic accomplishment, so she attempted with no little success to infatuate a hard-headed, blunt and supposedly invincible theatrical manager, who, in his cold, stolid way, gave her what love there was in him. This, however, not satisfying her, she played two ends against the middle, and finding a young man of wealth and position who could give her, in his youth, the exuberance and joy utterly apart from the character of the theatrical manager, she adopted him and for a while lived with him. Exhausting his money she cast him aside, always spending a certain part of the time with the theatrical manager. The young man became crazed, and at a restaurant tried to murder all of them.

From that time up to the opening of the play her career was a succession of brilliant coups in gaining the confidence and love, not to say the money, of men of all ages and all walks in life. Her fascination was as undeniable as her insincerity of purpose. She had never made an honest effort to be an honest woman, although she imagined herself always persecuted, the victim of circumstances, and was always ready to excuse any viciousness of character which led her into her peculiar difficulties. While acknowledged to be a mistress of her business — that of acting — from a purely technical point of view, her lack of sympathy, her abuse of her dramatic temperament in her private affairs, had been such as to make it impossible for her sincerely to impress audiences with real

emotional power, and therefore, despite the influences which she always had at hand, she remained a mediocre artist.

At the time of the opening of our play she has played a summer engagement with a stock company in Denver, which has just ended. She has met John Madison, a man of about twenty-seven years of age, whose position is that of a dramatic critic on one of the local papers. Laura Murdock, with her usual wisdom, started to fascinate John Madison, but has found that, for once in her life, she has met her match.

John Madison is good to look at, frank, virile, but a man of broad experience, and not to be hoodwinked. For the first time Laura Murdock feels that the shoe is pinching the other foot, and without any possible indication of reciprocal affection she has been slowly falling desperately, madly, honestly and decently in love with him. She has for the past two years been the special favorite and mistress of Willard Brockton. The understanding is one of pure friendship. He is a man who has a varied taste in the selection of his women, is honest in a general way, and perfectly frank about his amours. He has been most generous with Laura Murdock, and his close relations with several very prominent theatrical managers have made it possible for him to secure her desirable engagements, generally in New York. With all her past experiences, tragic and otherwise, Laura Murdock has found nothing equal to this sudden, this swiftly increasing, love for the young Western man. At first she attempted to deceive him. Her baby face, her masterful assumption of innocence and childlike devotion, made no impression upon him. He has let her know in no uncertain way that he knew her record from the day she stepped on American soil in San Francisco to the time when she had come to Denver, but still he liked her.

John Madison is a peculiar type of the Western man. Up to the time of his meeting Laura he had always been employed either in the mines or on a newspaper west of the Mississippi River. He is one of those itinerant reporters; to-day you might find him in Seattle, to-morrow in Butte, the next week in Denver, and then possibly he would make the circuit from Los Angeles to 'Frisco, and then all around again. He drinks his whiskey straight, plays his faro fairly, and is not particular about the women with whom he goes. He started life in the Western country at an early age. His natural talents, both in literature and in general adaptability to all conditions of life, were early exhibited, but his *alma mater* was the bar-room, and the faculty of that college its bar-tenders and gamblers and general habitués.

He seldom has social engagements outside of certain disreputable establishments where a genial personality or an overburdened pocketbook gives *entrée* and the rules of conventionality have never even been whispered. His love affairs, confined to this class of women, have seldom lasted more than a week or ten days. His editors know him as a brilliant genius, irresponsible, unreliable, but at times inestimably valuable. He cares little for personal appearance beyond a certain degree of neatness. He is quick on the trigger, and in a time of overheated argument can go some distance with his fists; in fact, his whole career is best described as "happy-go-lucky."

He realizes fully his ability to do almost anything fairly well, and some things especially well, but he has never tried to accomplish anything beyond the earning of a comfortable living. Twenty-five or thirty dollars a week was all he needed. With that he could buy his liquor, treat his women, sometimes play a little faro, sit up all night and sleep all day, and in general lead the life of good-natured vagabondage which has always pleased him and he had chosen as a career.

The objection of safer and saner friends to this form of livelihood was always met by him with a slap on the back and a laugh. "Don't you worry about me, partner; if I'm going to hell I'm going there with bells on," was always his rejoinder, and yet when called upon to cover some great big news story, or report some vital event, he settled

down to his work with a steely determination and a grim joy that resulted in work which classified him as a genius. Any great mental effort of this character, any unusual achievement along these lines, would be immediately followed by a protracted debauch that would upset him physically and mentally for weeks at a time, but he always recovered and landed on his feet, and with the same laugh and smile again went at his work.

If there have been opportunities to meet decent women of good social standing he has always thrown them aside with the declaration that they bore him to death, and there never had entered into his heart a feeling or idea of real affection until he met Laura. He fell for a moment under the spell of her fascination, and then, with cold logic, he analyzed her, and found out that while outwardly she had every sign of girlhood, ingenuousness, sweetness of character and possibility of affection, spiritually and mentally she was nothing more than a moral wreck. He observed keenly her efforts to win him and her disappointment at her failure — not that she cared so much for him personally, but that it hurt her vanity not to be successful with this good-for-nothing, good-natured vagabond, when men of wealth and position she made kneel at her feet. He observed her slowly changing point of view; how from a kittenish ingenuousness she became serious, womanly, really sincere. He knew that he had awakened in her her first decent affection, and he knew that she was awakening in him his first desire to do things and be big and worth while. So together these two began to drift toward a path of decent dealing, decent ambition, decent thought, and decent love, until at last they both find themselves, and acknowledge all the wickedness of what had been and plan for all the virtue and goodness of what is to be. It is at this point that our first act begins.

Elfie St. Clair is a type of a Tenderloin grafter in New York, who after all has been more sinned against than sinning; who, having been imposed upon, deceived, ill-treated and bulldozed by the type of men who prey on women in New York, has turned the tables, and with her charm and her beauty has gone out to make the same slaughter of the other sex as she suffered with many of her sisters.

She is a woman without a moral conscience, whose entire life is dictated by a small mental operation. Coming to New York as a beautiful girl she entered the chorus. She became famous for her beauty. On every hand were the stage-door vultures ready to give her anything that a woman's heart could desire, from clothes to horses, carriages, money and whatnot; but with a girl-like instinct, she fell in love with a man connected with the company, and during all the time that she might have profited and become a rich woman by the attentions of these outsiders, she remained true to her love until finally her fame as the beauty of the city had waned. The years told on her to a certain extent, and there were others coming, as young as she had been and as good to look at; and where the automobile of the millionaire had once been waiting for her she found that through her faithfulness to her lover it was now there for some one else. Yet she was content with her joys until finally the man deliberately jilted her and left her alone.

What had gone of her beauty had been replaced by a keen knowledge of human nature and of men, so she determined to give herself up entirely to a life of gain. She knows just how much champagne should be drunk without injuring one's health. She knows just what physical necessities should be indulged in to preserve to the greatest degree her remaining beauty. There is no trick of the hairdresser, the modiste, the manicurist, or any one of the legion of people who devote their time to aiding the outward fascinations of women, which she does not know. She knows exactly what perfumes to use, what stockings to wear, how she should live, how far she should indulge in any dissipation, and all this she has determined to devote to profit. She knows that as an actress she has no future; that the time of a woman's beauty is limited. Conscious that she has already lost the youthful litheness of figure which had made her so fascinating in the past, she has laid aside every sentiment, physical and spiritual, and has determined to choose a man as

her companion who has the biggest bankroll and the most liberal nature. His age, his station in life, the fact whether she likes or dislikes him, does not enter into this scheme at all. She figures that she has been made a fool of by men and that there is only one revenge, the accumulation of a fortune to make her independent of them once and for all. There are, of course, certain likes and dislikes that she enjoys, and in a way she indulges them. There are men whose company she cares for, but their association is practically sexless and has come down to a point of mere good fellowship.

Willard Brockton, a New York broker, is an honest sensualist, and when one says an honest sensualist, the meaning is a man who has none of the cad in his character, who takes advantage of no one, and allows no one to take advantage of him. He honestly detests any man who takes advantage of a pure woman. He detests any man who deceives a woman. He believes that there is only one way to go through life, and that is to be frank with those with whom one deals. He is a master hand in stock manipulation, and in the questionable practices of Wall Street he has realized that he has to play his cunning and craft against the cunning and craft of others. He is not at all in sympathy with this mode of living, but he thinks it is the only method by which he can succeed in life. He measures success by the accumulation of money, but he considers his business career as a thing apart from his private existence.

He does not associate, to any great extent, with what is known as "society." He keeps in touch with it simply to maintain his business position. There is always an interrelationship among the rich in business and private life, and he gives such entertainments as are necessary to the members of New York's exclusive set simply to make certain his relative position with other successful Wall Street men.

As far as women were concerned, the particular type of actress such as Laura Murdock and Elfie St. Clair appeals to him. He likes their good fellowship. He loves to be with a gay party at night in a café. He likes the rather looseness of living which does not quite reach the disreputable. Behind all this, however, is a rather high sense of honor. He detests and despises the average stage-door Johnny, and he loathes the type of man who seeks to take young girls out of theatrical companies for their ruin.

His women friends are as wise as himself. When they enter into an agreement with him there is no deception. In the first place he wants to like them; in the second place he wants them to like him; and finally, he wants to fix the amount of their living expenses at a definite figure and have them stand by it. He wants them to understand that he reserves the right at any time to withdraw his support, or transfer it to some other woman, and he gives them the same privilege.

He is always ready to help anyone who is unfortunate, and he has always hoped that some of these girls whom he knew would finally come across the right man, marry and settle down; but he insists that such an arrangement can be possible only by the honest admission on the woman's part of what she had done and been, and the thorough understanding of all these things by the man involved. He is gruff in his manner, determined in his purposes, honest in his point of view. He is a brute, almost a savage, but he is a thoroughly good brute and a pretty decent savage.

At the time of the opening of this play he and Laura Murdock have been friends for two years. He knows exactly what she is and what she had been, and their relations are those of pals. She has finished her season in Denver, and he has come out there to accompany her home. He has always told her whenever she felt it inconsistent with her happiness to continue her relations with him it is her privilege to quit, and he has reserved the same condition.

Jim Weston, between forty-five and fifty years of age, is the type of the semi-broken-down showman. In the evolution of the theatrical business in America, the old circus and

minstrel men have gradually been pushed aside, while younger men, with more advanced methods, have taken their place. The character is best realized by the way it is drawn in the play.

ANNIE. The only particular attention that should be called to the character of the negress Annie, who is the servant of Laura, is the fact that she must not in any way represent the traditional smiling colored girl or "mammy" of the South. She is the cunning, crafty, heartless, surly, sullen Northern negress, who, to the number of thousands, are servants of women of easy morals, and who infest a district of New York in which white and black people of the lower classes mingle indiscriminately, and is one of the most criminal sections of the city. The actress who plays this part must keep in mind its innate and brutal selfishness.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I

Mrs. Williams' Ranch House or Country Home, perched on the side of Ute Pass, near Colorado Springs, Colorado.

TIME: *Late in an August afternoon.*

ACT II

Laura Murdock's furnished Room, second story back, New York.

TIME: *Six months later.*

ACT III

Laura Murdock's Apartments in an expensive Hotel.

TIME: *Two months later. In the morning.*

ACT IV

Laura Murdock's Apartments. The same as Act III.

TIME: *The afternoon of the same day.*

THE EASIEST WAY

ACT I

SCENE. *The scene is that of the summer country ranch house of* MRS. WILLIAMS, *a friend of* LAURA MURDOCK'S, *and a prominent society woman of Denver, perched on the side of Ute Pass, near Colorado Springs. The house is one of unusual pretentiousness, and to a person not conversant with conditions as they exist in this part of Colorado, the idea might be that such magnificence could not obtain in such a locality. At the left of stage the house rises in the form of a turret, built of rough stone of a brown hue, two stories high, and projecting a quarter of the way out on the stage. The door leads to a small elliptical terrace built of stone, with heavy benches of Greek design, strewn cushions, while over the top of one part of this terrace is suspended a canopy made from a Navajo blanket. The terrace is supposed to extend almost to the right of stage, and here it stops. The stage must be cut here so that the entrance of* JOHN *can give the illusion that he is coming up a steep declivity or a long flight of stairs. There are chairs at right and left, and a small table at left. There are trailing vines around the balustrade of the terrace, and the whole setting must convey the idea of quiet wealth. Up stage is supposed to be the part of the terrace overlooking the cañon, a sheer drop of two thousand feet, while over in the distance, as if across the cañon, one can see the rolling foothills and lofty peaks of the Rockies, with Pike's Peak in the distance, snow-capped and colossal. It is late in the afternoon, and as the scene progresses, the quick twilight of a cañon, beautiful in its tints of purple and amber, becomes later pitch black, and the curtain goes down on an absolutely black stage. The cyclorama, or semi-cyclorama, must give the perspective of greater distances, and be so painted that the various tints of twilight may be shown.*

AT RISE. LAURA MURDOCK *is seen up* R. *stage, leaning a bit over the balustrade of the porch and shielding her eyes with her hand from the late afternoon sun as she seemingly looks up the Pass to the* L., *as if expecting the approach of someone. Her gown is simple, girlish, and attractive, and made of summery, filmy stuff. Her hair is done up in the simplest fashion with a part in the centre, and there is about her every indication of an effort to assume that girlishness of demeanor which has been her greatest asset through life.* WILLARD BROCKTON *enters from* L.; *he is a man six feet or more in height, stocky in build, clean-shaven and immaculately dressed. He is smoking a cigar, and upon entering takes one step forward and looks over toward* LAURA *in a semi-meditative manner.*

WILL. Blue?

LAURA. No.

WILL. What's up?

LAURA. Nothing.

WILL. A little preoccupied.

LAURA. Perhaps.

WILL. What's up that way?

LAURA. Which way?

WILL. The way you are looking.

LAURA. The road from Manitou Springs. They call it the trail out here.

WILL. I know that. You know I've done a lot of business west of the Missouri.

LAURA [*with a half-sigh*]. No, I did n't know it.

WILL. Oh, yes; south of here in the San Juan country. Spent a couple of years there once.

LAURA [*still without turning*]. That's interesting.

WILL. It was then. I made some money there. It's always interesting when you make money. Still —

LAURA [*still leaning in an absent-minded attitude*]. Still what?

WILL. Can't make out why you have your eyes glued on that road. Someone coming?

LAURA. Yes.

WILL. One of Mrs. Williams' friends, eh?

[WILL *crosses up, sits on seat* L. C.]

LAURA. Yes.

WILL. Yours too?

LAURA. Yes.

WILL. Man?

LAURA. Yes, a *real* man.

WILL [*catches the significance of this speech. He carelessly throws the cigar over the balustrade. He comes down* L. *and leans on chair with his back to* LAURA. *She has not moved more than to place her left hand on a cushion and lean her head rather wearily against it, looking steadfastly up the Pass*]. A real man. By that you mean —

LAURA. Just that — a real man.

WILL. Any difference from the many you have known?

LAURA. Yes, from all I have known.

WILL. So that is why you did n't come into Denver to meet me to-day, but left word for me to come out here?

LAURA. Yes.

WILL. I thought that I was pretty decent to take a dusty ride halfway across the continent in order to keep you company on your way back to New York, and welcome you to our home; but maybe I had the wrong idea.

LAURA. Yes, I think you had the wrong idea.

WILL. In love, eh?

LAURA. Yes, just that — in love.

WILL. A new sensation.

LAURA. No; the first conviction.

WILL. You have had that idea before. Every woman's love is the real one when it comes. [*Crosses up to* LAURA.] Do you make a distinction in this case, young lady?

LAURA. Yes.

WILL. For instance, what?

LAURA. This man is poor — absolutely broke. He has n't even got a [*crosses* R. *to armchair, leans over and draws with parasol on ground*] good job. You know, Will, all the rest, including yourself, generally had some material inducement.

WILL. What's his business?

[WILL *crosses* L. *to table and sits looking at magazine.*]

LAURA. He's a newspaper man.

WILL. H'm-m. Romance?

LAURA. Yes, if you want to call it that — romance.

WILL. Do I know him?

LAURA. How could you? You only came from New York to-day, and he has never been there.

[*He regards her with a rather amused, indulgent, almost paternal expression, in contrast to his big, bluff physical personality, with his iron-gray hair and his bulldog expression.* LAURA *looks more girlish than ever. This is imperative in order to thoroughly understand the character.*]

WILL. How old is he?

LAURA. Twenty-seven. You're forty-five.

WILL. No, forty-six.

LAURA. Shall I tell you about him? Huh?

[*Crosses* L. *to* WILL, *placing parasol on seat extreme* L.]

WILL. That depends.

LAURA. On what?

WILL. Yourself.

LAURA. In what way?

WILL. If it will interfere in the least with the plans I have made for you and for me.

LAURA. And have you made any particular plans for me that have anything particularly to do with you?

WILL. Yes, I have given up the lease of our apartment on West End Avenue, and I've got a house on Riverside Drive. Everything will be quiet and decent, and it'll be more comfortable for you. There's a stable near by, and your horses and car can be kept over there. You'll be your own mistress, and besides I've fixed you up for a new part.

LAURA. A new part! What kind of a part?

WILL. One of Charlie Burgess's shows, translated from some French fellow. It's been running over in Paris, Berlin, and

Vienna, and all those places for a year or more, and appears to be an awful hit. It's going to cost a lot of money. I told Charlie he could put me down for a half interest, and I'd give all the money providing you got an important rôle. Great part, I'm told. Kind of a cross between a musical comedy and an opera. Looks as if it might stay in New York all season. So that's the change of plan. How does it strike you?

[LAURA *crosses* L. *to door, meditating; pauses in thought.*]

LAURA. I don't know.

WILL. Feel like quitting? [*Turns to her.*]

LAURA. I can't tell.

WILL. It's the newspaper man, eh?

LAURA. That would be the only reason.

WILL. You've been on the square with me this summer, have n't you?

[*Crosses* L. *to table.*]

LAURA [*turns, looks at* WILL]. What do you mean by "on the square"?

WILL. Don't evade. There's only one meaning when I say that, and you know it. I'm pretty liberal. But you understand where I draw the line. You've not jumped that, have you, Laura?

LAURA. No, this has been such a wonderful summer, such a wonderfully different summer. Can you understand what I mean by that when I say "wonderfully different summer"? [*Crossing to* WILL.]

WILL. Well, he's twenty-seven and broke, and you're twenty-five and pretty; and he evidently, being a newspaper man, has that peculiar gift of gab that we call romantic expression. So I guess I'm not blind, and you both think you've fallen in love. That it?

LAURA. Yes, I think that's about it; only I don't agree to the "gift of gab" and the "romantic" end of it. [*Crosses* L. *to table.*] He's a man and I'm a woman, and we both have had our experiences. I don't think, Will, that there can be much of that element of what some folks call hallucination.

[*Sits on chair* L.; *takes candy-box on lap; selects candy.*]

WILL. Then the Riverside Drive proposition and Burgess's show is off, eh?

LAURA. I did n't say that.

WILL. And if you go back on the Overland Limited day after to-morrow, you'd just as soon I'd go to-morrow or wait until the day after you leave?

[LAURA *places candy-box back on table.*]

LAURA. I did n't say that, either.

WILL. What's the game?

LAURA. I can't tell you now.

WILL. Waiting for him to come?

[*Crosses, sits on seat* L.]

LAURA. Exactly.

WILL. Think he is going to make a proposition, eh?

LAURA. I know he is.

WILL. Marriage?

LAURA. Possibly.

WILL. You've tried that once, and taken the wrong end. Are you going to play the same game again?

LAURA. Yes, but with a different card.

[*Picks up magazine off table* L.]

WILL. What's his name?

LAURA. Madison — John Madison.

[*Slowly turning pages of magazine.*]

WILL. And his job?

LAURA. Reporter.

WILL. What are you going to live on — the extra editions?

LAURA. No, we're young, there's plenty of time. I can work in the meantime, and so can he; and then with his ability and my ability it will only be a matter of a year or two when things will shape themselves to make it possible.

WILL. Sounds well — a year off.

LAURA. If I thought you were going to make fun of me, Will, I should n't have talked to you.

[*Throws down magazine, crosses* L. *to door of house.*]

WILL [*crossing down* L. *in front of table*]. I don't want to make fun of you, but you must realize that after two years it is n't an easy thing to be dumped with so little ceremony. Maybe you have never given me any credit for possessing the slightest feeling, but even I can receive shocks from other sources than a break in the market.

LAURA [*crosses* R. *to* WILL]. It is n't easy for me to do this. You've been awfully kind, awfully considerate, but when I went

to you it was just with the understanding that we were to be pals. You reserved the right then to quit me whenever you felt like it, and you gave me the same privilege. Now, if some girl came along who really captivated you in the right way, and you wanted to marry, it would hurt me a little, — maybe a lot, — but I should never forget that agreement we made, a sort of two weeks' notice clause, like people have in contracts.

WILL [*he is evidently very much moved. Walks up stage to* R. *end of seat, looks over the cañon.* LAURA *looks after him.* WILL *has his back to the audience. Long pause*]. I'm not hedging, Laura. If that's the way you want it to be, I'll stand by just exactly what I said [*turns* L. *to* LAURA], but I'm fond of you, a damn sight fonder than I thought I was, now that I find you slipping away; but if this young fellow is on the square [LAURA *crosses to* WILL *at* R. C., *taking his right hand*] and he has youth and ability, and you've been on the square with him, why, all right. Your life has n't had much in it to help you get a diploma from any celestial college, and if you can start out now and be a good girl, have a good husband, and maybe some day good children [LAURA *sighs*], why, I'm not going to stand in the way. Only I don't want you to make any of those mistakes that you made before.

LAURA. I know, but somehow I feel that this time the real thing has come, and with it the real man. I can't tell you, Will, how much different it is, but everything I felt before seems so sort of earthly — and somehow this love that I have for this man is so different. It's made me want to be truthful and sincere and humble for the first time in my life. The only other thing I ever had that I cared the least bit about, now that I look back, was your friendship. We have been good pals, have n't we?

[*Puts arms about* WILL.]

WILL. Yes, it's been a mighty good two years for me. I was always proud to take you around, because I think you one of the prettiest things in New York [LAURA *crosses* R., *and girlishly jumps into armchair*], and that helps some, and you're always jolly, and you never complained. You always spent a lot of money, but it was a pleasure to see you spend it; and then you never offended me. Most women offend men by coming around looking untidy and sort of unkempt, but somehow you always knew the value of your beauty, and you always dressed up. I always thought that maybe some day the fellow would come along, grab you, and make you happy in a nice way, but I thought that he'd have to have a lot of money. You know you've lived a rather extravagant life for five years, Laura. It won't be an easy job to come down to cases and suffer for the little dainty necessities you've been used to.

LAURA. I've thought all about that, and I think I understand.

[*Facing audience, leaning elbows on lap.*]

WILL. You know if you were working without anybody's help, Laura, you might have a hard time getting a position. As an actress you're only fair.

LAURA. You need n't remind me of that. That part of my life is my own. [*Crosses up to seat.*] I don't want you to start now and make it harder for me to do the right thing. It is n't fair; it is n't square; and it is n't right. You've got to let me go my own way. [*Crosses to* WILL, *puts* R. *hand on his shoulder.*] I'm sorry to leave you, in a way, but I want you to know that if I go with John it changes the spelling of the word comradeship into love, and mistress into wife. Now please don't talk any more.

[*Crosses* R. *to post, takes scarf off chair* R.]

WILL. Just a word. Is it settled?

LAURA [*impatiently*]. I said I did n't know. I would know to-day — that's what I'm waiting for. Oh, I don't see why he does n't come.

[WILL *turns up to seat looking over Pass* L.]

WILL [*pointing up the Pass*]. Is that the fellow coming up here?

LAURA [*quickly running toward the balustrade of seat* L., *saying as she goes :*] Where?

[*Kneels on seat.*]

WILL [*pointing*]. Up the road there. On that yellow horse.

LAURA [*looking*]. Yes, that's John. [*She waves her handkerchief, and putting one hand to her mouth cries:*] Hello!

JOHN [*off stage with the effect as if he was on the road winding up toward the house*]. Hello, yourself!

LAURA [*same effect*]. Hurry up, you're late.

JOHN [*same effect, a little louder*]. Better late than never.

LAURA [*same effect*]. Hurry up.

JOHN [*little louder*]. Not with this horse.

LAURA [*to* WILL, *with enthusiastic expression*]. Now, Will, does he look like a yellow reporter?

WILL [*with a sort of sad smile*]. He *is* a good-looking chap.

LAURA [*looking down again at* JOHN]. Oh, he's just simply more than that. [*Turns quickly to* WILL.] Where's Mrs. Williams?

WILL [*motioning with thumb toward* L. *side of ranch house*]. Inside, I guess, up to her neck in bridge.

LAURA [*goes hurriedly over to door* L.]. Mrs. Williams! Oh, Mrs. Williams!

MRS. WILLIAMS [*heard off stage*]. What is it, my dear?

LAURA. Mr. Madison is coming up the path.

MRS. WILLIAMS [*off stage*]. That's good.

LAURA. Shan't you come and see him?

MRS. WILLIAMS [*same*]. Lord, no! I'm six dollars and twenty cents out now, and up against an awful streak of luck.

LAURA. Shall I give him some tea?

MRS. WILLIAMS [*same*]. Yes, do, dear; and tell him to cross his fingers when he thinks of me.

[*In the meantime* WILL *has leaned over the balustrade, evidently surveying the young man, who is supposed to be coming up the path, with a great deal of interest. Underneath his stolid, business-like demeanor of squareness, there is undoubtedly within his heart a very great affection for* LAURA. *He realizes that during her whole career he has been the only one who has influenced her absolutely. Since the time that they lived together he has always dominated, and he has always endeavored to lead her along a path that meant the better things of a Bohemian existence. His coming all the way from New York to Denver to accompany* LAURA *home was simply another example of his keen interest in the woman, and he suddenly finds that she has drifted away from him in a manner to which he could not in the least object, and that she had been absolutely fair and square in her agreement with him.* WILL *is a man who, while rough and rugged in many ways, possesses many of the finer instincts of refinement, latent though they may be, and his meeting with* JOHN *ought, therefore, to show much significance, because on his impressions of the young man depend the entire justification of his attitude in the play.*]

LAURA [*turning toward* WILL *and going to him, slipping her hand involuntarily through his arm and looking eagerly with him over the balustrade in almost girlish enthusiasm*]. Do you like him?

WILL [*smiling*]. I don't know him.

LAURA. Well, do you think you'll like him?

WILL. Well, I hope I'll like him.

LAURA. Well, if you hope you'll like him you ought to think you like him. He'll turn the corner of that rock in just a minute and then you can see him. Do you want to see him?

WILL [*almost amused at her girlish manner*]. Why, yes — do you?

LAURA. Do I? Why, I have n't seen him since last night! There he is. [*Waves her hand.*] Hello, John!

[*Gets candy-box, throws pieces of candy at* JOHN.]

JOHN [*his voice very close now*]. Hello, girlie! How's everything?

LAURA. Fine! Do hurry.

JOHN. Just make this horse for a minute. Hurry is not in his dictionary.

LAURA. I'm coming down to meet you.

JOHN. All — right.

LAURA [*turns quickly to* WILL]. You don't care. You'll wait, won't you?

WILL. Surely.

[LAURA *hurriedly exits* R. *and disappears.* WILL *goes down* C.]

[*After a short interval* LAURA *comes in more like a sixteen-year-old girl than anything else, pulling* JOHN *after her. He is a tall, finely built type of Western manhood, a frank face, a quick nervous energy, a mind that works like lightning, a prepossessing smile, and a personality that is wholly captivating. His clothes are a bit dusty from the ride, but are not in the least pretentious, and his leggins are of canvas and spurs of brass, such as are used in the army. His hat is off and he is pulled on to the stage from the* R. *entrance, more like a great big boy than a man. His hair is a bit tumbled, and he shows every indication of having had a rather long and hard ride.*]

LAURA. Hello, John!

JOHN. Hello, girlie!

[*Then she suddenly recovers herself and realizes the position that she is in. Both men measure each other for a moment in silence, neither flinching the least bit. The smile has faded from* JOHN'S *face and the mouth droops into an expression of firm determination.* LAURA *for a moment loses her ingenuousness. She is the least bit frightened at finally placing the two men face to face, and in a voice that trembles slightly from apprehension:*]

LAURA. Oh, I beg your pardon! Mr. Madison, this is Mr. Brockton, a friend of mine from New York. You've often heard me speak of him; he came out here to keep me company when I go home.

JOHN [*comes forward, extends a hand, looking* WILL *right in the eye*]. I am very glad to know you, Mr. Brockton.

WILL. Thank you.

JOHN. I've heard a great deal about you and your kindness to Miss Murdock. Anything that you have done for her in a spirit of friendliness I am sure all her friends must deeply appreciate, and I count myself in as one.

WILL [*in an easy manner that rather disarms the antagonistic attitude of* JOHN]. Then we have a good deal in common, Mr. Madison, for I also count Miss Murdock a friend, and when two friends of a friend have the pleasure of meeting, I dare say that's a pretty good foundation for them to become friends too.

JOHN. Possibly. Whatever my opinion may have been of you, Mr. Brockton, before you arrived, now I have seen you — and I'm a man who forms his conclusions right off the bat — I don't mind telling you that you've agreeably surprised me. That's just a first impression, but they run kind o' strong with me.

WILL. Well, young man, I size up a fellow in pretty short order, and all things being equal, I think you'll do.

LAURA [*radiantly*]. Shall I get the tea?

JOHN. Tea!

LAURA. Yes, tea. You know it must be tea — nothing stronger.

[*Crosses* L. *to door.*]

JOHN [*looking at* WILL *rather comically*]. How strong are you for that tea, Mr. Brockton?

WILL. I'll pass; it's your deal, Mr. Madison.

JOHN. Mine! No, deal me out this hand.

LAURA. I don't think you're at all pleasant, but I'll tell you one thing — it's tea this deal or no game.

[*Crosses up stage to seat, picks up magazine, turns pages.*]

WILL. No game then [*crosses* L. *to door*], and I'm going to help Mrs. Williams; maybe she's lost nearly seven dollars by this time, and I'm an awful dub when it comes to bridge. [*Exit.*]

LAURA [*tossing magazine on to seat, crosses quickly to* JOHN, *throws her arms around his neck in the most loving manner*]. John!

[*As the act progresses the shadows cross the Pass and golden light streams across the lower hills and tops the snow-clad peaks. It becomes darker and darker, the lights fade to beautiful opalescent*

hues, until, when the curtain comes on the act, with JOHN *and* WILL *on the scene, it is pitch dark, a faint glow coming out of the door at* R. *Nothing else can be seen but the glow of the ash on the end of each man's cigar as he puffs it in silent meditation on their conversation.*]

JOHN. Well, dear?

LAURA. Are you going to be cross with me?

JOHN. Why?

LAURA. Because he came?

JOHN. Brockton?

LAURA. Yes.

JOHN. You did n't know, did you?

LAURA. Yes, I did.

JOHN. That he was coming?

LAURA. He wired me when he reached Kansas City.

JOHN. Does he know?

LAURA. About us?

JOHN. Yes.

LAURA. I've told him.

JOHN. When?

LAURA. To-day.

JOHN. Here?

LAURA. Yes.

JOHN. With what result?

LAURA. I think it hurt him.

JOHN. Naturally.

LAURA. More than I had any idea it would.

JOHN. I'm sorry. [*Sits in armchair.*]

LAURA. He cautioned me to be very careful and to be sure I knew my way.

JOHN. That was right.

[LAURA *gets a cushion in each hand off seat; crosses down to* L. *of armchair, throws one cushion on ground, then the other on top of it, and kneels beside his chair. Piano in house playing a Chopin Nocturne.*]

LAURA. John.

JOHN. Yes.

LAURA. We've been very happy all summer.

JOHN. Very.

LAURA [*rises, sits on* L. *arm of chair, her arm over back*]. And this thing has gradually been growing on us?

JOHN. That's true.

LAURA. I did n't think that when I came out here to Denver to play in a little stock company, it was going to bring me all this happiness, but it has, has n't it?

JOHN. Yes.

LAURA [*changing her position, sits on his lap, arms around his neck*]. And now the season's over and there is nothing to keep me in Colorado, and I've got to go back to New York to work.

JOHN. I know; I've been awake all night thinking about it.

LAURA. Well?

JOHN. Well?

LAURA. What are we going to do?

JOHN. Why, you've got to go, I suppose.

LAURA. Is it good-bye?

JOHN. For a while, I suppose — it's good-bye.

LAURA. What do you mean by a while?

[LAURA *turns* JOHN'S *face to her, looks at him searchingly.*]

JOHN. Until [*piano plays crescendo, then softens down*] I get money enough together, and am making enough to support you, then come and take you out of the show business and make you Mrs. Madison.

[LAURA *tightens her arm around his neck, her cheek goes close to his own, and all the wealth of affection that the woman is capable of at times is shown. She seems more like a dainty little kitten purring close to its master. Her whole thought and idea seem to be centred on the man whom she professes to love.*]

LAURA. John, that is what I want above everything else.

JOHN. But, Laura, we must come to some distinct understanding before we start to make our plans. We're not children.

LAURA. No, we're not.

JOHN. Now in the first place [LAURA *rises, crosses to* C.] we'll discuss you, and in the second place we'll discuss me. We'll keep nothing from each other [LAURA *picks up cushions, places them on seat*], and we'll start out on this campaign [LAURA *turns back to* C., *facing audience*] of decency and

honor, fully understanding its responsibilities, without a chance of a come-back on either side.

LAURA [*becoming very serious*]. You mean that we should tell each other all about each other, so, no matter what's ever said about us by other people, *we'll* know it first?

JOHN [*rising*]. That's precisely what I'm trying to get at.

LAURA. Well, John, there are so many things I don't want to speak of even to you. It is n't easy for a woman to go back and dig up a lot of ugly memories and try to excuse them.

[*Crosses* L. *to front of table, picks up magazine, places it on table* L.]

JOHN. I've known everything from the first; how you came to San Francisco as a kid and got into the show business, and how you went wrong, and then how you married, still a kid, and how your husband did n't treat you exactly right, and then how, in a fit of drunkenness, he came home and shot himself. [LAURA *buries her head in her hands, making exclamations of horror.* JOHN *crosses to her as if sorry for hurting her, touches her on shoulder.*] But that's all past now, and we can forget that. And I know how you were up against it after that, how tough it was for you to get along. Then finally how you've lived, and — and that you and this man Brockton have been — well — never mind. I've known it all for months, and I've watched you. Now, Laura, the habit of life is a hard thing to get away from. You've lived in this way for a long time. If I ask you to be my wife you'll have to give it up; you'll have to go back to New York and struggle on your own hook until I get enough to come for you. I don't know how long that will be, but it *will* be. Do you love me enough to stick out for the right thing?

[LAURA *crosses* C. *to him, puts her arms around him, kisses him once very affectionately, looks at him very earnestly.*]

LAURA. Yes, I think this is my one great chance. I do love you and I want to do just what you said.

JOHN. I think you will. I'm going to make the same promise. Your life, dear girl, has been an angel's compared with mine. I've drank whiskey, played bank, and raised hell ever since the time I could develop a thirst; and ever since I've been able to earn my own living I've abused every natural gift God gave me. The women I've associated with are n't good enough to touch the hem of your skirt, but they liked me, and [JOHN *crosses* R. *to armchair, turns up stage, then faces her*] well — I must have liked them. My life has n't been exactly loose, it's been all in pieces. I've never done anything dishonest. I've always gone wrong just for the fun of it, until I met you. [*Crosses to her, takes her in his arms.*] Somehow then I began to feel that I was making an awful waste of myself.

LAURA. John!

JOHN. Some lovers place a woman on a pedestal and say, "She never has made a mistake." [*Taking her by each arm he playfully shakes her.*] Well, we don't need any pedestals. I just know you never will make a mistake.

LAURA [*kissing him*]. John, I'll never make you take those words back.

[*Arms around his neck.*]

JOHN. That goes double. You're going to cut out the cabs and cafés, and I'm going to cut out the whiskey and all-night sessions [LAURA *releases him; he backs slightly away* C.]; and you're going to be somebody and I'm going to be somebody, and if my hunch is worth the powder to blow it up, we're going to show folks things they never thought were in us. Come on now, kiss me.

[*She kisses him, tears are in her eyes. He looks into her face with a quaint smile.*]

JOHN. You're on, ain't you, dear?

LAURA. Yes, I'm on.

JOHN. Then [*points toward door with his* L. *arm over her shoulder*] call him.

LAURA. Brockton?

JOHN. Yes, and tell him you go back to New York without any travelling companion this season.

LAURA. Now?

JOHN. Sure.

LAURA. You want to hear me tell him?

JOHN [*with a smile*]. We're partners, are n't we? I ought to be in on any important transaction like that, but it's just as you say.

LAURA. I think it would be right you should. I'll call him now.

JOHN. All right. [*Crossing* R. *to stairway.*]

[*She crosses to door* L.; *twilight is becoming very much more pronounced.*]

LAURA [*at door*]. Mr. Brockton! Oh, Mr. Brockton!

WILL [*off stage*]. Yes.

LAURA. Can you spare a moment to come out here?

WILL. Just a moment.

LAURA. You must come now.

WILL. All right. [*She waits for him and after a reasonable interval he appears at door.*] Laura, it's a shame to lure me away from that mad speculation in there. I thought I might make my fare back to New York if I played until next summer. What's up?

LAURA. Mr. Madison wants to talk to you, or rather I do, and I want him to listen.

WILL [*his manner changing to one of cold, stolid calculation*]. Very well.

[*Comes down off step of house.*]

LAURA. Will.

WILL. Yes?

LAURA. I'm going home day after tomorrow on the Overland Limited.

WILL. I know.

LAURA. It's awfully kind of you to come out here, but under the circumstances I'd rather you'd take an earlier or a later train.

WILL. And may I ask what circumstances you refer to?

LAURA. Mr. Madison and I are going to be married. [*Pause.*] He [WILL *looks inquiringly at* JOHN] knows of your former friendship for me, and he has the idea that it must end.

WILL. Then the Riverside Drive proposition, with Burgess's show thrown in, is declared off, eh?

LAURA. Yes; everything is absolutely declared off.

WILL. Can't even be friends any more, eh?

[JOHN *crosses* L., *and taking* LAURA'S *arm, passes her over* R. *to seat, his back is partly to audience.*]

JOHN. You could hardly expect Miss Murdock to be friendly with you under the circumstances. You could hardly expect me to [LAURA *puts scarf across her shoulders*] sanction any such friendship.

WILL. I think I understand your position, young man, and I perfectly agree with you, that is — if your plans come out successfully.

JOHN. Thank you.

LAURA. Then everything is settled [*crossing in front of* JOHN *to* L. C., *facing* WILL, *back to audience*] just the way it ought to be — frankly and aboveboard?

WILL. Why, I guess so. If I was perfectly confident that this new arrangement was going to result happily for you both, I think it would be great, only I'm somewhat doubtful, for when people become serious and then fail, I know how hard those things hit, having *been* hit once myself.

JOHN. So you think we're making a wrong move and there is n't a chance of success.

WILL. No, I don't make any such gloomy prophecy. If you make Laura a good husband, and she makes you a good wife, and together you win out, I'll be mighty glad. As far as I am concerned I shall absolutely forget every thought of Laura's friendship for me.

LAURA. I thought you'd be just that way. [*Crosses to* WILL, *shakes hands.*]

WILL [*rising*]. And now I must be off. [*Takes her by both hands and shakes them.*] Good-bye, girlie! Madison, good luck. [*Crosses* R. *to* JOHN. *Shakes* JOHN'S *hands, looks into his eyes.*] I think you've got the stuff in you to succeed if your foot don't slip.

JOHN. What do you mean by my foot slipping, Mr. Brockton?

WILL. You want me to tell you?

JOHN. I sure do.

WILL [*turns* L. *to* LAURA]. Laura, run into the house and see if Mrs. Williams has won another quarter. [LAURA *sinks fearfully into chair* L.] Madison and I are going to smoke a cigar and have a friendly

chat, and when we get through I think we'll both be better off.

LAURA. You are sure that everything will be all right?

WILL. Sure.

[LAURA *looks at* JOHN *for assurance, exits* L., *he nods reassuringly.*]

WILL. Have a cigar?

[*Servant in house places lamp on table inside house.*]

JOHN. No, I'll smoke my own.

[*Crosses down* R., *sits in armchair.*]

WILL. What is your business?

[*Crosses up to seat* C., *sits.*]

JOHN. What's yours?

WILL. I'm a broker.

JOHN. I'm a reporter, so I've got something on you.

WILL. What kind?

JOHN. General utility, dramatic critic on Sunday nights.

WILL. Pay you well?

JOHN [*turns, looking at* WILL]. That's pretty fresh. What's the idea?

WILL. I'm interested. I'm a plain man, Mr. Madison, and I do business in a plain way. Now if I ask you a few questions and discuss this matter with you in a frank way, don't get it in your head that I'm jealous or sore, but simply I don't want either of you people to make a move that's going to cost you a lot of pain and trouble. If you want me to talk sense to you, all right. If you don't we'll drop it now. What's the answer?

JOHN. I'll take a chance, but before you start I want to tell you that the class of people that you belong to I have no use for — they don't speak my language. You are what they call a manipulator of stocks; that means that you're living on the weaknesses of other people, and it almost means that you get your daily bread, yes, and your cake and your wine too, from the production of others. You're a "gambler under cover." Show me a man who's dealing bank, and he's free and aboveboard. You can figure the percentage against you, and then if you buck the tiger and get stung, you do it with your eyes open. With your financiers the game is crooked twelve months of the year, and from a business point of view, I think you are a crook. Now I guess we understand each other. If you've got anything to say, why, spill it.

[WILL *rises, comes down* R. C. *toward* JOHN, *showing anger in his tones.*]

WILL. We are not talking business now, but women. How much money do you earn?

[*Crosses* L. *to chair* L. *of table; gets it.*]

JOHN. Understand, I don't think it is any of your damn business, but I'm going through with you on this proposition, just to see how the land lays. But take my tip, you be mighty careful how you speak about the girl if you're not looking for trouble.

WILL. All right, but how much did you say you made?

[*Crosses right to* R. C., *carrying chair; sits.*]

JOHN. Thirty dollars a week.

WILL. Do you know how much Laura could make if she just took a job on her own merits?

JOHN. As I don't intend to share in her salary, I never took the trouble to inquire.

WILL. She'd get about forty dollars.

JOHN. That laps me ten.

WILL. How are you going to support her? Her cabs cost more than your salary, and she pays her week's salary for an everyday walking-hat. She's always had a maid; her simplest gown flirts with a hundred-dollar note; her manicurist and her hairdresser will eat up as much as you pay for your board. She never walks when it's stormy, and every afternoon there's her ride in the park. She dines at the best places in New York, and one meal costs her more than you make in a day. Do you imagine for a moment that she's going to sacrifice these luxuries for any great length of time?

JOHN. I intend to give them to her.

WILL. On thirty dollars a week?

JOHN. I propose to go out and make a lot of money.

WILL. How?

JOHN. I have n't decided yet, but you can bet your sweet life that if I ever try

and make up my mind that it's got to be, it's got to be.

WILL. Never have made it, have you?

JOHN. I have never tried.

WILL. Then how do you know you can?

JOHN. Well, I'm honest and energetic. If you can get great wealth the way you go along, I don't see why I can't earn a little.

WILL. There's where you make a mistake. Money-getting does n't always come with brilliancy. I know a lot of fellows in New York who can paint a great picture, write a good play, and when it comes to oratory, they've got me lashed to a pole; but they're always in debt. They never get anything for what they do. In other words, young man, they are like a skyrocket without a stick — plenty of brilliancy, but no direction, and they blow up and fizzle all over the ground.

JOHN. That's New York. I'm in Colorado, and I guess you know there is a difference.

WILL. I hope you'll make your money, because I tell you frankly that's the only way you can hold this girl. She's full of heroics now, self-sacrifice, and all the things that go to make up the third act of a play, but the minute she comes to darn her stockings, wash out her own handkerchiefs and dry them on the window, and send out for a pail of coffee and a sandwich for lunch, take it from me it will go Blah! [*Rises, crosses* L. *to front of table, with chair, places it with back to him, braces his back on it, facing* JOHN.] You're in Colorado writing her letters once a day with no checks in them. That may be all right for some girl who has n't tasted the joy of easy living, full of the good things of life, but one who for ten years has been doing very well in the way these women do is not going to let up for any great length of time. So take my advice if you want to hold her. Get that money quick, and don't be so damned particular how you get it either.

[JOHN'S *patience is evidently severely tried. He approaches* WILL, *who remains impassive.*]

JOHN. Of course you know you've got the best of me.

WILL. How?

JOHN. We're guests.

WILL. No one's listening.

JOHN. 'T is n't that. If it was anywhere but here, if there was any way to avoid all the nasty scandal, I'd come a-shootin' for you, and you know it.

WILL. Gun-fighter, eh?

JOHN. Perhaps. Let me tell you this. I don't know how you make your money, but I know what you do with it. You buy yourself a small circle of sycophants; you pay them well for feeding your vanity; and then you pose — pose with a certain frank admission of vice and degradation. And those who are n't quite as brazen as you call it manhood. Manhood? [*Crossing slowly* R. *to armchair, sits.*] Why, you don't know what the word means. It's the attitude of a pup and a cur.

WILL [*angrily*]. Wait a minute [*crosses* R. *to* JOHN], young man, or I'll —

[JOHN *rises quickly. Both men stand confronting each other for a moment with fists clinched. They are on the very verge of a personal encounter. Both seem to realize that they have gone too far.*]

JOHN. You'll what?

WILL. Lose my temper and make a damn fool of myself. That's something I've not done for — let me see — why, it must be nearly twenty years — oh, yes, fully that.

[*He smiles;* JOHN *relaxes and takes one step back.*]

JOHN. Possibly it's been about that length of time since you were human, eh?

WILL. Possibly — but you see, Mr. Madison, after all you're at fault.

JOHN. Yes?

WILL. Yes, the very first thing you did was to lose your temper. Now people who always lose their temper will never make a lot of money, and you admit that that is a great necessity — I mean now — to you.

JOHN. I can't stand for the brutal way you talk.

[*Crosses up to seat, picks up newspaper, slams it down angrily on seat, and sits facing* R., *elbow on balustrade.*]

WILL. But you have got to stand it. The truth is never gentle. [*Crosses up and sits* L. *of* JOHN.] Most conditions in life are unpleasant, and if you want to meet them squarely, you have got to realize the unpleasant point of view. That's the only way you can fight them and win.

JOHN [*turns to* WILL]. Still, I believe Laura means what she says, in spite of all you say and the disagreeable logic of it. I think she loves me. If she should ever want to go back to the old way of getting along, I think she'd tell me so. So you see, Brockton, all your talk is wasted, and we'll drop the subject.

[*Crosses down and sits in armchair* R., *facing* R.]

WILL. And if she should ever go back and come to me, I am going to insist that she let you know all about it. It'll be hard enough to lose her, caring for her the way you do, but it would hurt a lot more to be double-crossed.

JOHN [*sarcastically*]. That's very kind. Thanks!

WILL. Don't get sore. It's common sense and it goes, does it not?

JOHN [*turns to* WILL]. Just what goes?

WILL. If she leaves you first, you are to tell me, and if she comes to me, I'll make her let you know just when and why.

[JOHN *is leaning on arm, facing* WILL; *his hand shoots out in a gesture of warning to* WILL.]

JOHN. Look out!

WILL. I said common sense.

JOHN. All right.

WILL. Agreed? [*A pause.*]

JOHN. You're on.

[*By this time the stage is black and all that can be seen is the glow of the two cigars. Piano in the next room is heard.* JOHN *crosses slowly and deliberately* L. *to door, looks in, throws cigar away over the terrace, exits into house, closes doors, and as* WILL *is seated on terrace, puffing cigar, the red coal of which is alone visible, a slow curtain.*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE. *Six months have elapsed. The furnished room of* LAURA MURDOCK, *second story back of an ordinary cheap theatrical lodging-house in the theatre district of New York. The house is evidently of a type of the old-fashioned brown-stone front, with high ceilings, dingy walls, and long, rather insecure windows. The woodwork is depressingly dark. The ceiling is cracked, the paper is old and spotted and in places loose. There is a door* R. 2 *leading to the hallway, and running from* R. 2 *to* R. 3. *There is a large old-fashioned wardrobe in which are hung a few old clothes, most of them a good deal worn and shabby, showing that the owner —* LAURA MURDOCK *— has had a rather hard time of it since leaving Colorado in the first act. The doors of this wardrobe must be equipped with springs so that they will open outward, and also furnished with wires so they can be controlled from the back. This is absolutely necessary, owing to business which is done during the progress of the act. The drawer in the bottom of the wardrobe is open at rise. This is filled with a lot of rumpled tissue paper and other rubbish. An old pair of shoes is seen at the upper end of the wardrobe on the floor. At* R. C. *is an armchair over which is thrown an ordinary kimono, and on top of the wardrobe are a number of magazines and old books, and an unused parasol wrapped up in tissue paper.*

The dresser, which is up stage and C. *against the flat, is in keeping with the general meanness, and its adornment consists of old post-cards stuck in between the mirror and its frame, with some well-worn veils and ribbons hung on the side. On the dresser is a pincushion, a bottle of cheap perfume, purple in color and nearly empty; a common crockery match-holder containing matches, which must be practicable; a handkerchief box, powder box and puff, rouge box and rouge paw, hand mirror, small alcohol curling-iron heater, which must also be practicable, as it is used in business of act; scissors, curling-tongs, hair comb and brush, and a small cheap picture of* JOHN MADISON; *a small work-box containing a thimble and thread, and stuck in the pincushion are a couple of needles*

threaded. Directly to the left of the bureau, with the door to the outside closet intervening, is a broken-down washstand, on which is a basin half full of water, a bottle of tooth powder, toothbrushes and holder, soap and soap-dish and other cheap toilet articles, and a small drinking-glass. Hung on the corner of the washstand is a soiled towel. Hung on the rack across the top of the washstand one can see a pair of stockings. On the floor in front of the washstand is a pitcher half full of water, also a large waste water jar of the cheapest type.

Below the washstand, and with the head against the flat, is a three-quarter old wooden bed, also showing the general decay of the entire room. Tacked on the head of this bed is a large photo of JOHN MADISON, *with a small bow of dainty blue ribbon at the top covering the tack. Under the photo are arranged half a dozen cheap artificial violets, in pitiful recognition of the girl's love for her absent sweetheart.*

Under the mattress at the head of the bed is a heavy cardboard box about thirty inches long, seven inches wide, and four inches deep, containing about one hundred and twenty-five letters and eighty telegrams tied in about eight bundles, with dainty ribbon. One bundle must contain all practical letters of several closely written pages each, each letter having been opened. They must be written upon business paper and envelopes such as are used in newspaper offices and by business men.

Under the pillow at the head of the bed is carelessly thrown a woman's night-dress. Thrown on the bed is an old book, open, with face downward, and beside it is an apple which some one has been nibbling upon. Across the foot of the bed is a soiled quilt, untidily folded. The pillows are hollow in the centre, as if having been used lately. At the foot of the bed is a small table with soiled and ink-stained cover, upon which are a cheap pitcher containing some withered carnations and a desk-pad, with paper, pen, ink, and envelopes scattered around.

Against the flat below the bed is an old mantelpiece and fireplace with iron grate, such as are used in houses of this type. On the mantelpiece are photos of actors and actresses, an old mantel clock in the centre, in front of which is a box of cheap peppermint candy in large pieces, and a plate with two apples upon it; some cheap pieces of bric-à-brac and a little vase containing joss-sticks, such as one might burn to improve the atmosphere of these dingy damp houses. Below the mantelpiece is a thirty-six-inch theatre trunk, with theatre labels on it, in the tray of which are articles of clothing, a small box of thread, and a bundle of eight pawn tickets. Behind the trunk is a large cardboard box. Hanging from the ceiling directly over the table is a single-arm gas-jet, from which is hung a turkey wishbone. On the jet is a little wire arrangement to hold small articles for heating. Beside the table C. *is a chair. Under the bed is a pair of bedroom slippers and a box. Between the bed and the mantel is a small tabourette on which is a book and a candlestick with the candle half burned. On the floor in front of the door* R. *is a slipper, also another in front of the dresser, as if they had been thrown carelessly down. On the wardrobe door, on the down-stage side, is tacked another photo of* JOHN MADISON.

In alcove off L. *is a table on which is a small oil stove, two cups, saucers, and plates, a box of matches, tin coffee-box, and a small Japanese teapot. On a projection outside the window* R. *in flat is a pint milk bottle half filled with milk, and an empty benzine bottle, which is labelled. Both are covered with snow.*

The backing shows a street snow-covered. In arranging the properties it must be remembered that in the wardrobe is a box of Uneeda biscuit, with one end torn open. There is a door down R. 2 *opening inward, leading into the hallway. The windows are at back* R. *running from floor nearly to the ceiling. This window does not rise, but opens in the manner of the French or door window.*

On the outside of the window covering the same is an iron guard such as is used in New York on the lower back windows. The rods running up and down are about four inches apart. There is a projection outside the window such as would be formed by a storm door in the basement; running the full length of the window and about thirty inches wide, raised about a foot from the floor in front and about nine inches in the back, there is opening inward a door at L. *back leading into a small alcove, as has been mentioned*

before. The door is half glass, the glass part being the upper half of the door, and is ajar when the curtain rises. The flat on L. C. *runs diagonally from* L. C. *to* L. 1, *with only a projection at fireplace such as would be made for a chimney.*

AT RISE *of curtain the stage is empty. After a pause* LAURA *enters* R., *passes the dresser up* C., *places umbrella at* R., *end of it against wall, crosses* R. *to back of armchair, removes gloves, lays them over back of chair, takes off her coat and hat, hangs hat on end of wardrobe, and puts coat inside; notices old slipper in front of dresser and one on the extreme* R., *and with impatience picks them up and puts them in wardrobe drawer. Then crosses to dresser, gets needle and thread off pincushion and mends small rip in glove, after which she puts gloves in top drawer of dresser, crosses to* L. *to extreme end of dresser, and standing facing* R. *takes handkerchief out of box, takes up bottle containing purple perfume, holds it up so she can see there is only a small quantity left, sprinkles a drop on handkerchief carefully, so as not to use too much, looks at bottle again to see how much is left, places it on dresser; goes up-stage side of bed, kneels on head of bed and looks lovingly at photo of* JOHN MADISON, *and finally pulls up the mattress and takes out box of letters, and opens it. She then sits down in Oriental fashion, with her feet under her, selects a bundle of letters, unties the ribbon, and takes out a letter such as has been hereinbefore described, glances it over, puts it down in her lap, and again takes a long look at the picture of* JOHN MADISON. ANNIE *is heard coming upstairs.* LAURA *looks quickly towards the door, puts the letters back in box, and hurriedly places box under mattress and replaces pillows.* ANNIE *knocks on door* R. LAURA *rises and crosses to door* C.

LAURA. Come in.

[ANNIE, *a chocolate-colored negress, enters. She is slovenly in appearance, but must not in any way denote the "mammy." She is the type one encounters in cheap theatrical lodging-houses. She has a letter in her hand, also a clean towel folded, and approaches* LAURA.]

LAURA. Hello, Annie.

ANNIE. Heah's yo' mail, Miss Laura.

LAURA [*taking letter*]. Thank you!

[*She looks at the address and does not open it.*]

ANNIE. One like dat comes every mornin', don't it? Used to all be postmarked Denver. Must 'a' moved. [*Trying to look over* LAURA'S *shoulder;* LAURA *turns, sees her;* ANNIE *looks away.*] Where is dat place called Goldfield, Miss Laura?

LAURA. In Nevada.

ANNIE. In *Nevada?*

LAURA. Yes, Nevada.

ANNIE [*draws her jacket closer around her as if chilly*]. Must be mighty smaht to write yuh every day. De pos'man brings it 'leven o'clock mos' always, sometimes twelve, and again sometimes tehn; but it comes every day, don't it?

LAURA. I know.

ANNIE [*crosses to* R. *of armchair, brushes it off and makes an effort to read letter, leaning across chair*]. Guess must be from yo' husban', ain't it?

LAURA. No, I have n't any.

ANNIE [*crossing to* C. *triumphantly*]. Dat's what Ah tole Mis' Farley when she was down talkin' about you dis mornin'. She said if he all was yo' husban' he might do somethin' to help you out. Ah told her Ah did n't think you had any husban'. Den she says you ought to have one, you're so pretty.

LAURA. Oh, Annie!

ANNIE [*sees door up* L. C. *open, goes and bangs it shut*]. Der ain't a decent door in dis old house. Mis' Farley said yo' might have mos' any man you [*hangs clean towel on washstand*] wanted just for de askin', but Ah said yuh [*takes newspaper and books off bed, places them on table*] was too particular about the man yo' 'd want. Den she did a heap o' talkin'.

LAURA. About what?

[*Places letter open on table, looks at hem of skirt, discovers a rip, rises, crosses up to dresser* C., *gets needle, crosses down* L. *to trunk; opens and takes thimble out, closes lid of tray, sits on it, and sews skirt during scene.*]

ANNIE [*at bed fussing around, folds night-*

gown, places it under pillow]. Well, you know, Mis' Farley, she's been havin' so much trouble wid her roomers. Yestuhday dat young lady on de second flo' front she lef'. She's goin' wiv some troupe on the road. She owed her room for three weeks and jus' had to leave her trunk. [*Crosses* R. *to* C., *fussing over table* L.] My! how Mis' Farley did scold her. Mis' Farley let on she could have paid dat money if she wanted to, but somehow Ah guess she could n't — [*Reads letter on table.*]

LAURA [*sees her, angrily exclaims*]. Annie!

ANNIE [*in confusion, brushing off table*] — for if she could she would n't have left her trunk, would she, Miss Laura?

[*Crosses to armchair* R., *picks up kimono off back.*]

LAURA. No, I suppose not. What did Mrs. Farley say about me?

ANNIE. Oh! nothin' much.

[*Crosses to* L. C., *stands.*]

LAURA. Well, what?

ANNIE. She kinder say somethin' 'bout yo' bein' three weeks behind in yo' room rent, and she said she t'ought it was 'bout time yuh handed her somethin', seein' as how yuh must o' had some stylish friends when yuh come here.

LAURA. Who, for instance?

ANNIE. Ah don't know. Mis' Farley said some of 'em might slip yo' enough just to help yuh out. [*Pause.*] Ain't yo' got nobody to take care of you at all, Miss Laura?

[*Hangs kimono over back of armchair.*]

LAURA. No! No one.

ANNIE. Dat's too bad.

LAURA. Why?

ANNIE [*crossing to* L. C.]. Mis' Farley says yuh would n't have no trouble at all gettin' any man to take care of yuh if yuh wanted to.

LAURA [*with sorrowful shudder*]. Please [*doors of wardrobe open very slowly*] don't, Annie.

ANNIE. Dere's a gemman [*playing with corner of tablecloth*] dat calls on one of de ladies from the Hippodrome, in de big front room downstairs. He's mighty nice, and he's been askin' 'bout you.

LAURA [*exasperated*]. Oh, shut up!

ANNIE [*sees doors of wardrobe* L. *have swung open; she crosses, slams them shut, turns to* LAURA]. Mis' Farley says — [*Doors have swung open again, hit her in the back. She turns and bangs them to with all her strength.*] Damn dat door! [*Crosses* L. *to washstand, up* L., *grabs basin which is half full of water, empties same into waste-jar, puts basin on washstand, and wipes out with soiled towel.*] Mis' Farley says if she don't get someone in the house dat has reg'lar money soon, she'll have to shut up and go to the po'house.

LAURA. I'm sorry; I'll try again to-day.

[*Rises, crosses up to mantel, gets desk-pad, etc., crosses to* R. *of table, sits.*]

ANNIE [*crosses to* L. C. *back of bed, wiping basin with towel*]. Ain't yo' got any job at all?

LAURA. No.

ANNIE. When yuh come here yuh had lots of money and yo' was mighty good to me. You know Mr. Weston?

LAURA. Jim Weston?

ANNIE. Yassum, Mr. Weston what goes ahead o' shows and lives on the top floor back; he says nobody 's got jobs now. Dey're so many actors and actresses out o' work. Mis' Farley says she don't know how she's goin' to live. She said you'd been mighty nice up until three weeks ago, but yuh ain't got much left, have you, Miss Laura?

LAURA [*rising and going to the bureau*]. No. It's all gone.

ANNIE. Mah sakes! All dem rings and things? You ain't done sold 'em?

[*Sinks on bed.*]

LAURA. They're pawned. What did Mrs. Farley say she was going to do?

ANNIE. Guess maybe Ah'd better not tell.

[*Crosses* R. *to door hurriedly, carrying soiled towel.*]

LAURA. Please do.

[*Crosses to chair,* R., *left side.*]

ANNIE. Yuh been so good to me, Miss Laura. Never was nobody in dis house what give me so much, and Ah ain't been gettin' much lately. And when Mis' Farley said yuh must either pay yo' rent or she

would ask yuh for your room, Ah just set right down on de back kitchen stairs and cried. Besides, Mis' Farley don't like me very well since you've ben havin' yo' breakfasts and dinners brought up here.

LAURA. Why not?

[*Takes kimono off chair-back, crosses up to dresser, puts kimono in drawer, takes out purse.*]

ANNIE. She has a rule in dis house dat nobody can use huh chiny or fo'ks or spoons who ain't boa'din' heah, and de odder day when yuh asked me to bring up a knife and fo'k she ketched me comin' upstairs, and she says, "Where yuh goin' wid all dose things, Annie?" Ah said, "Ah'm just goin' up to Miss Laura's room with dat knife and fo'k." Ah said, "Ah'm goin' up for nothin' at all, Mis' Farley, she jest wants to look at 'em, Ah guess." She said, "She wants to eat huh dinner wid 'em, Ah guess." Ah got real mad, and Ah told her if she'd give me mah pay Ah'd brush right out o' here; dat's what Ah'd do, Ah'd brush right out o' here.

[*Violently shaking out towel.*]

LAURA. I'm sorry, Annie, if I've caused you any trouble. Never mind, I'll be able to pay the rent to-morrow or next day anyway. [*She fumbles in purse, takes out a quarter, and turns to* ANNIE.] Here!

ANNIE. No, ma'am, Ah don' want dat.

[*Making a show of reluctance.*]

LAURA. Please take it.

ANNIE. No, ma'am, Ah don' want it. You need dat. Dat's breakfast money for yuh, Miss Laura.

LAURA. Please take it, Annie, I might just as well get rid of this as anything else.

ANNIE [*takes it rather reluctantly*]. Yuh always was so good, Miss Laura. Sho' yuh don' want dis?

LAURA. Sure.

ANNIE. Sho' yo' goin' to get plenty mo'?

LAURA. Sure.

MRS. FARLEY'S VOICE [*downstairs*]. Annie! Annie!

ANNIE [*going to door, opens it*]. Dat's Mis' Farley. [*To* MRS. FARLEY.] Yassum, Mis' Farley.

SAME VOICE. Is Miss Murdock up there?

ANNIE. Yassum, Mis' Farley, yassum!

MRS. FARLEY. Anything doin'?

ANNIE. Huh?

MRS. FARLEY. Anything doin'?

ANNIE [*at door*]. Ah — Ah — hain't asked, Missy Farley.

MRS. FARLEY. Then do it.

LAURA [*coming to the rescue at the door. To* ANNIE]. I'll answer her. [*Out of door to* MRS. FARLEY.] What is it, Mrs. Farley?

MRS. FARLEY [*her voice softened*]. Did ye have any luck this morning, dearie?

LAURA. No; but I promise you faithfully to help you out this afternoon or to-morrow.

MRS. FARLEY. Sure? Are you certain?

LAURA. Absolutely.

MRS. FARLEY. Well, I must say these people expect me to keep — [*Door closed.*]

[LAURA *quietly closes the door, and* MRS. FARLEY'S *rather strident voice is heard indistinctly.* LAURA *sighs and walks toward table* L., *sits.* ANNIE *looks after her, and then slowly opens the door.*]

ANNIE. Yo' sho' dere ain't nothin' I can do fo' yuh, Miss Laura?

LAURA. Nothing.

[ANNIE *exit.* LAURA *sits down and looks at letter, opening it. It consists of several pages closely written. She reads some of them hurriedly, skims through the rest, and then turns to the last page, without reading, glances at it; lays on table, rises.*]

LAURA. Hope, just nothing but hope.

[*She crosses to bed, falls face down upon it, burying her face in her hands. Her despondency is palpable. As she lies there a hurdy-gurdy in the street starts to play a popular air. This arouses her and she rises, crosses to wardrobe, takes out box of crackers, opens window, gets bottle of milk off sill outside, places them on table, gets glass off washstand, at the same time humming the tune of the hurdy-gurdy when knock comes; she crosses quickly to dresser, powders nose. The knock is timidly repeated.*]

LAURA [*without turning, and in a rather tired tone of voice*]. Come in.

[JIM WESTON, *a rather shabby theatrical advance agent of the old school, enters timidly, halting at the door and holding the knob in his hand. He is a man of about forty years old, dressed in an ordinary manner, of medium height, and in fact has the appearance of a once prosperous clerk who has been in hard luck. His relations with* LAURA *are those of pure friendship. They both live in the same lodging-place, and both having been out of employment, they have naturally become acquainted.*]

JIM. Can I come in?

LAURA [*without turning*]. Hello, Jim Weston. [*He closes door and enters, down* R.] Any luck?

JIM. Lots of it.

LAURA. That's good. Tell me.

JIM. It's bad luck. Guess you don't want to hear.

LAURA. I'm sorry. Where have you been?

JIM. I kind o' felt around up at Burgess's office. I thought I might get a job there, but he put me off until to-morrow. Somehow those fellows always do business to-morrow. [*Hurdy-gurdy dies out.*]

LAURA. Yes, and there's always to-day to look after.

JIM. I'm ready to give up. I've tramped Broadway for nine weeks until every piece of flagstone gives me the laugh when it sees my feet coming. Got a letter from the missis this morning. The kids got to have some clothes, there's measles in the town, and mumps in the next village. I've just got to raise some money or get some work, or the first thing you'll know I'll be hanging around Central Park on a dark night with a club.

LAURA. I know just how you feel. Sit down, Jim. [JIM *crosses and sits in chair* R. *of table.*] It's pretty tough for me [*offers* JIM *glass of milk; he refuses; takes cracker*], but it must be a whole lot worse for you with a wife and kids.

JIM. Oh, if a man's alone he can generally get along — turn his hand to anything; but a woman —

LAURA. Worse, you think?

JIM. I was just thinking about you and what Burgess said?

LAURA. What was that?

[*Crosses to bed; sits on up-stage side, sipping milk.*]

JIM. You know Burgess and I used to be in the circus business together. He took care of the grafters when I was boss canvas man. I never could see any good in shaking down the rubes for all the money they had and then taking part of it. He used to run the privilege car, you know.

LAURA. Privilege car?

JIM. Had charge of all the pickpockets, — dips we called 'em — sure-thing gamblers, and the like. Made him rich. I kept sort o' on the level and I'm broke. Guess it don't pay to be honest —

LAURA [*turns to him and in a significant voice:*] You don't really think that?

JIM. No, maybe not. Ever since I married the missis and the first kid come we figured the only good money was the kind folks worked for and earned; but when you can't get hold of that, it's tough.

LAURA. I know.

JIM. Burgess don't seem to be losing sleep over the tricks he's turned. He's happy and prosperous, but I guess he ain't any better now then he was then.

LAURA. Maybe not. I've been trying to get an engagement from him. There are half a dozen parts in his new attractions that I could do, but he has never absolutely said "no," but yet somehow he's never said "yes."

JIM. He spoke about you.

LAURA. In what way?

[*Rising, stands behind* JIM'S *chair.*]

JIM. I gave him my address and he seen it was yours, too. Asked if I lived in the same place.

LAURA. Was that all?

JIM. Wanted to know how you was getting on. I let him know you needed work, but I did n't tip my hand you was flat broke. He said something about you being a damned fool.

LAURA [*suddenly and interested*]. How?

[LAURA *crosses* R. C.]

JIM. Well, Johnny Ensworth — you

know he used to do the fights on the *Evening Journal;* now he's press agent for Burgess; nice fellow and way on the inside—he told me where you were in wrong.

LAURA. What have I done?

[*Sits in armchair.*]

JIM. Burgess don't put up the money for any of them musical comedies — he just trails. Of course he's got a lot of influence, and he's always Johnny-on-the-Spot to turn any dirty trick that they want. There are four or five rich men in town who are there with the bank-roll, providing he engages women who ain't so very particular about the location of their residence, and who don't hear a curfew ring at 11.30 every night.

LAURA. And he thinks I am too particular?

JIM. That's what was slipped me. Seems that one of the richest men that is in on Mr. Burgess's address book is a fellow named Brockton from downtown some place. He's got more money than the Shoe and Leather National Bank. He likes to play show business.

LAURA [*rises quickly*]. Oh!

[*Crosses to wardrobe, gets hat, crosses* L. *to dresser, gets scissors with intention of curling feathers.*]

JIM. I thought you knew him. I thought it was just as well to tell you where he and Burgess stand. They're pals.

LAURA [*coming over to* JIM *and with emphasis crosses* L. *to down-stage side of bed, puts hat and scissors on bed*]. I don't want you to talk about him or any of them. I just want you to know that I'm trying to do everything in my power to go through this season without any more trouble. I've pawned everything I've got; I've cut every friend I knew. But where am I going to end? That's what I want to know — where am I going to end? [*To bed and sits.*] Every place I look for a position something interferes. It's almost as if I were blacklisted. I know I could get jobs all right if I wanted to pay the price, but I won't. I just want to tell you, I won't. No!

[*Rises, crosses to mantel, rests elbow.*]

JIM. That's the way to talk. [*Rises.*] I don't know you very well, but I've watched you close. I'm just a common ordinary showman who never had much money, and I'm going out o' date. I've spent most of my time with nigger minstrel shows and circuses, but I've been on the square. That's why I'm broke. [*Rather sadly.*] Once I thought the missis would have to go back and do her acrobatic act, but she could n't do that, she'd grown so damn fat. [*Crosses* L. *to* LAURA.] Just you don't mind. It'll all come out right.

LAURA. It's an awful tough game, is n't it? [*Crosses to* R. C.]

JIM [*during this speech* LAURA *gets cup, pours milk back into bottle, closes biscuit-box, puts milk on shed outside, and biscuits into wardrobe, cup in alcove* L.]. It's hell forty ways from the Jack. It's tough for me, but for a pretty woman with a lot o' rich fools jumping out o' their automobiles and hanging around stage doors, it must be something awful. I ain't blaming the women. They say "self-preservation is the first law of nature," and I guess that's right; but sometimes when the show is over and I see them fellows with their hair plastered back, smoking cigarettes in a [LAURA *crosses to chair* R. *of table and leans over back*] holder long enough to reach from here to Harlem, and a bank-roll that would bust my pocket and turn my head, I feel as if I'd like to get a gun and go a-shooting around this old town.

LAURA. Jim!

JIM. Yes, I do — you bet.

LAURA. That would n't pay, would it?

JIM. No, they're not worth the job of sitting on that throne in Sing Sing, and I'm too poor to go to Matteawan. But all them fellows under nineteen and over fifty-nine ain't much use to themselves or anyone else.

LAURA [*rather meditatively*]. Perhaps all of them are not so bad.

JIM [*sits on bed*]. Yes, they are — angels and all. Last season I had one of them shows where a rich fellow backed it on account of a girl. We lost money and he lost his girl; then we got stuck in Texas. I telegraphed: "Must have a thousand, or

can't move." He just answered: "Don't move." We did n't.

LAURA. But that was business.

JIM. Bad business. It took a year for some of them folks to get back to Broadway. Some of the girls never did, and I guess never will.

LAURA. Maybe they're better off, Jim. [*Sits* R. *of table.*]

JIM. Could n't be worse. They're still in Texas. [*To himself.*] Wish I knew how to do something else, being a plumber or a walking delegate; they always have jobs.

LAURA. Well, I wish I could do something else too, but I can't, and we've got to make the best of it.

JIM. I guess so. [*Crosses to* R. C.] I'll see you this evening. I hope you'll have good news by that time. [*Bus. Starts to exit, starts to open door; then retreats a step, with hand on door-knob, crosses* L. *to* C. *In a voice meant to be kindly.*] If you'd like to go to the theatre to-night and take some other woman in the house, maybe I can get a couple of tickets for some of the shows. I know a lot of fellows who are working.

LAURA. No, thanks. I have n't anything to wear to the theatre, and I don't —

JIM [*with a smile crosses to* LAURA, *puts arm around her*]. Now you just cheer up! Something's sure to turn up. It always has for me, and I'm a lot older than you, both in years and in this business. There's always a break in hard luck sometime — that's sure.

LAURA [*smiling through her tears*]. I hope so. But things are looking pretty hopeless now, are n't they?

JIM. I'll go down and give Mrs. F. a line o' talk and try [*crossing to* R. C.] to square you for a couple of days more anyway. But I guess she's laying pretty close to the cushion herself, poor woman.

LAURA. Annie says a lot of people owe her.

JIM. Well, you can't pay what you have n't got. And even if money was growing on trees, it's winter now. [JIM *goes towards door.*] I'm off. Maybe to-day is lucky day. So long!

LAURA. Good-bye.

JIM. Keep your nerve. [*Exit.*]

LAURA. I will. [*She sits for a moment in deep thought, picks up the letter received as if to read it, and then throws it down in anger. She buries her head in hands.*] I can't stand it — I just simply can't stand it.

MRS. FARLEY'S VOICE [*off stage*]. Miss Murdock — Miss Murdock.

LAURA [*brushing away tears, rises, goes to door* R., *and opens it*]. What is it?

SAME VOICE. There's a lady down here to see you.

ELFIE'S VOICE [*off stage*]. Hello, dearie, can I come up?

LAURA. Is that you, Elfie?

ELFIE. Yes; shall I come up?

LAURA. Why, certainly.

[*She waits at the door for a moment, and* ELFIE ST. CLAIR *appears. She is gorgeously gowned in the rather extreme style affected by the usual New York woman who is cared for by a gentleman of wealth and who has not gone through the formality of matrimonial alliance. Her conduct is always exaggerated and her attitude vigorous. Her gown is of the latest design, and in every detail of dress she shows evidence of most extravagant expenditure. She carries a handbag of gold, upon which are attached such trifles as a gold cigarette-case, a gold powder-box, pencils, and the like.* ELFIE *throws her arms around* LAURA, *and both exchange kisses.*]

ELFIE. Laura, you old dear [*crossing* L. *to table*], I've just found out where you've been hiding, and came around to see you.

LAURA [*who is much brightened by* ELFIE'S *appearance*]. Elfie, you're looking bully. How are you, dear?

ELFIE. Fine.

LAURA. Come in and sit down. I have n't much to offer, but —

ELFIE. Oh, never mind. It's such a grand day outside, and I've come around in my car to take you out [*sits* R. *of table*]. You know I've got a new one, and it can go some.

LAURA [*sits on arm of chair* R.]. I 'm sorry but I can't go out this afternoon, Elfie.

ELFIE. What's the matter?

LAURA. You see I'm staying home a

good deal nowadays. I have n't been feeling very well and I don't go out much.

ELFIE. I should think not. I have n't seen you in Rector's or Martin's since you came back from Denver. Got a glimpse of you one day trailing up Broadway, but could n't get to you — you dived into some office or other. [*For the first time she surveys the room, rises, looks around critically, crossing* L. *to mantel.*] Gee! Whatever made you come into a dump like this? It's the limit.

LAURA [*crossing* L. *and standing back of the table*]. Oh, I know it is n't pleasant, but it's my home, and after all — a home's a home.

ELFIE. Looks more like a prison. [*Takes candy from mantel, spits it out on floor.*] Makes me think of the old days of Child's sinkers and a hall bedroom.

LAURA. It's comfortable.

[*Leaning hands on table.*]

ELFIE. Not! [*Sits on bed, trying bed with comedy effect.*] Say, is this here for an effect, or do you sleep on it?

LAURA. I sleep on it.

ELFIE. No wonder you look tired. Say, listen, dearie. What else is the matter with you anyway?

LAURA. Nothing.

ELFIE. Yes, there is. What happened between you and Brockton? [*Notices faded flowers in vase on table, takes them out, tosses them into fireplace, replaces them with gardenias which she wears.*] He's not broke, because I saw him the other day.

LAURA. Where?

ELFIE. In the park. Asked me out to luncheon, but I could n't go. You know, dearie, I've got to be so careful. Jerry's so awful jealous — the old fool.

LAURA. Do you see much of Jerry nowadays, Elfie?

ELFIE. Not any more than I can help and be nice. He gets on my nerves. Of course, I've heard about your quitting Brockton.

LAURA. Then why do you ask?

[*Crosses around chair* R. *of table, stands.*]

ELFIE. Just wanted to hear from your own dear lips what the trouble was. Now tell me all about it. Can I smoke here?

[*Takes cigarette case up, opens it, selecting cigarette.*]

LAURA. Surely.

[*Gets matches off bureau, puts them on table.*]

ELFIE. Have one? [*Offers case.*]

LAURA. No, thank you.

[*Sits in chair* R. *of table, facing* ELFIE.]

ELFIE. H'm-m, h'm-m, hah! [*Lights cigarette.*] Now go ahead. Tell me all the scandal. I'm just crazy to know.

LAURA. There's nothing to tell. I have n't been able to find work, that is all, and I'm short of money. You can't live in hotels, you know, with cabs and all that sort of thing, when you're not working.

ELFIE. Yes, you can. I have n't worked in a year.

LAURA. But you don't understand, dear. I — I — Well, you know I — well, you know — I can't say what I want.

ELFIE. Oh, yes, you can. You can say anything to me — everybody else does. We've been pals. I know you got along a little faster in the business than I did. The chorus was my limit, and you went into the legitimate thing. But we got our living just the same way. I did n't suppose there was any secret between you and me about that.

LAURA. I know there was n't then, Elfie, but I tell you I'm different now. I don't want to do that sort of thing, and I've been very unlucky. This has been a terribly hard season for me. I simply have n't been able to get an engagement.

ELFIE. Well, you can't get on this way. Won't [*pauses, knocking ashes off cigarette to cover hesitation*] Brockton help you out?

LAURA. What's the use of talking to you [*rises and crosses to fireplace*], Elfie; you don't understand.

ELFIE [*puffing deliberately on cigarette and crossing her legs in almost a masculine attitude*]. No? Why don't I understand?

LAURA. Because you can't; you've never felt as I have.

ELFIE. How do you know?

LAURA [*turning impatiently*]. Oh, what's the use of explaining?

ELFIE. You know, Laura, I'm not much on giving advice, but you make me sick. I thought you'd grown wise. A young girl

just butting into this business might possibly make a fool of herself, but you ought to be on to the game and make the best of it.

LAURA [*going over to her angrily*]. If you come up here, Elfie, to talk that sort of stuff to me, please don't. I was West this summer. I met someone, a real man, who did me a whole lot of good — a man who opened my eyes to a different way of going along — a man who — Oh, well, what's the use? You don't know — you don't know. [*Sits* L. *on bed.*]

ELFIE [*throws cigarette into fireplace*]. I don't know, don't I? I don't know, I suppose, that when I came to this town from up state — a little burg named Oswego — and joined a chorus, that I did n't fall in love with just such a man. I suppose I don't know that then I was the best-looking girl in New York, and everybody talked about me? I suppose I don't know that there were men, all ages and with all kinds of money, ready to give me anything for the mere privilege of taking me out to supper? And I did n't do it, did I? For three years I stuck by this good man who was to lead me in a good way toward a good life. And all the time I was getting older, never quite so pretty one day as I had been the day before. I never knew then what it was to be tinkered with by hairdressers and manicures or a hundred and one of those other people who make you look good. I did n't have to have them then. [*Rises, crosses to* R. *of table facing* LAURA.] Well, you know, Laura, what happened.

LAURA. Was n't it partly your fault, Elfie?

ELFIE [*speaking across table angrily*]. Was it my fault that time made me older and I took on a lot of flesh? Was it my fault that the work and the life took out the color, and left the make-up? Was it my fault that other pretty young girls came along, just as I'd come, and were chased after, just as I was? Was it my fault the cabs were n't waiting any more and people did n't talk about how pretty I was? And was it my fault when he finally had me alone, and just because no one else wanted me, he got tired and threw me flat — cold flat [*brings hand down on table*] — and I'd been on the dead level with him. [*With almost a sob crosses up to bureau, powders nose, comes down back of table.*] It almost broke my heart. Then I made up my mind to get even and get all I could out of the game. Jerry came along. He was a has-been and I was on the road to be. He wanted to be good to me, and I let him. That's all.

LAURA. Still, I don't see how you can live that way. [*Lies on bed.*]

ELFIE. Well, you did, and you did n't kick.

LAURA. Yes, but things are different with me now. You'd be the same way if you were in my place.

ELFIE. No. I've had all the romance I want, and I'll stake you to all your love affairs. [*Crosses back of bed, touches picture over bed.*] I am out to gather in as much coin as I can in my own way, so when the old rainy day comes along I'll have a little change to buy myself an umbrella.

LAURA [*rising and angry crosses* R. *to armchair*]. What did you come here for? Why can't you leave me alone when I'm trying to get along?

ELFIE. Because I want to help you.

LAURA [*during speech crosses* L. *to upstage side of bed, angrily tosses quilt to floor and sits on bed facing* R. *in tears*]. You can't help me. I'm all right — I tell you I am. What do you care anyway?

ELFIE [*sits on bed, crosses down stage to lower* L. *side of bed, sits facing* LAURA]. But I do care. I know how you feel with an old cat for a landlady and living up here on a side street with a lot of cheap burlesque people. Why the room's cold [LAURA *rises, crosses* R. *to window*], and there's no hot water, and you're beginning to look shabby. You have n't got a job — chances are you won't have one. What does [*indicating a picture on bed with thumb*] this fellow out there do for you? Send you long letters of condolences? That's what I used to get. When I wanted to buy a new pair of shoes or a silk petticoat, he told me how much he loved me; so I had the other ones resoled and turned the old petticoat. And look at you, you're beginning to show it. [*She surveys her carefully.*] I do believe there are

lines coming in your face [LAURA *crosses to dresser quickly, picks up hand mirror, looks at herself*], and you hide in the house because you've nothing new to wear.

LAURA [*puts down mirror, crossing down to back of bed*]. But I've got what you have n't got. I may have to hide my clothes, but I don't have to hide my face. And you with that man — he's old enough to be your father — a toddling dote hanging on your apron-strings, I don't see how you dare show your face to a decent woman.

ELFIE [*rises*]. You don't! — but you did once and I never caught you hanging your head. You say he's old. I know he's old, but he's good to me. He's making what's left of my life pleasant. You think I like him. I don't, — sometimes I hate him, — but he understands; and you can bet your life his check is in my mail every Saturday night or there's a new lock on the door Sunday morning. [*Crossing* L. *to fireplace.*]

LAURA. How can you say such things to me?

ELFIE [*crosses to* L. *end of table*]. Because I want you to be square with yourself. You've lost all that precious virtue women gab about. When you've got the name, I say get the game.

LAURA. You can go now, Elfie, and don't come back.

ELFIE [*gathering up muff, etc.*]. All right, if that's the way you want it to be, I'm sorry. [*A knock on the door.*]

LAURA [*controlling herself after a moment's hesitation*]. Come in.

[ANNIE *enters with a note, crosses, and hands it to* LAURA.]

ANNIE. Mis' Farley sent dis, Miss Laura.

[LAURA *takes the note and reads it. She is palpably annoyed.*]

LAURA. There's no answer.

ANNIE. She tol' me not to leave until Ah got an answah.

LAURA. You must ask her to wait.

ANNIE. She wants an answah.

LAURA. Tell her I'll be right down — that it will be all right.

ANNIE. But, Miss Laura, she tol' me to get an answah. [*Exit reluctantly.*]

LAURA [*half to herself and half to* ELFIE]. She's taking advantage of your being here. [*Standing* R. *near door.*]

ELFIE. How?

LAURA. She wants money — three weeks' room-rent. I presume she thought you'd give it to me.

ELFIE. Huh! [*Moves to* L.]

LAURA [*crossing* L. *to table*]. Elfie, I've been a little cross; I did n't mean it.

ELFIE. Well?

LAURA. Could — could you lend me thirty-five dollars until I get to work?

ELFIE. Me?

LAURA. Yes.

ELFIE. Lend *you* thirty-five dollars?

LAURA. Yes; you've got plenty of money to spare.

ELFIE. Well, you certainly have got a nerve.

LAURA. You might give it to me. I have n't a dollar in the world, and you pretend to be such a friend to me!

ELFIE [*turning and angrily speaking across table*]. So that's the kind of woman you are, eh? A moment ago you were going to kick me out of the place because I was n't decent enough to associate with you. You know how I live. You know how I get my money — the same way you got most of yours. And now that you've got this spasm of goodness I'm not fit to be in your room; but you'll take my money to pay your debts. You'll let me go out and do this sort of thing for your benefit, while you try to play the grand lady. I've got your number now, Laura. Where in hell is your virtue anyway? You can go to the devil rich, poor, or any other way. I'm off!

[ELFIE *rushes toward door; for a moment* LAURA *stands speechless, then bursts into hysterics.*]

LAURA. Elfie! Elfie! Don't go now! Don't leave me now! [ELFIE *hesitates with hand on door-knob.*] I can't stand it. I can't be alone. Don't go, please; don't go.

[LAURA *falls into* ELFIE'S *arms, sobbing. In a moment* ELFIE'S *whole demeanor changes and she melts into the tenderest womanly sympathy, trying her best to express herself in her crude way.*]

ELFIE. There, old girl, don't cry, don't cry. You just sit down here and let me put my arms around you. [ELFIE *leads* LAURA *over* L. *to armchair, places muff, etc., in chair, and sits* LAURA *down in chair.* ELFIE *sits on* R. *arm of chair with her left arm behind* LAURA; *hugs* LAURA *to her.* LAURA *in tears and sobbing during scene.*] I'm awful sorry — on the level, I am. I should n't have said it. I know that. But I've got feelings too, even if folks don't give me credit for it.

LAURA. I know, Elfie. I've gone through about all I can stand.

ELFIE. Well, I should say you have — and more than I would. Anyway a good cry never hurts any woman. I have one myself, sometimes — under cover.

LAURA [*more seriously, recovering herself*]. Perhaps what you said was true.

ELFIE. We won't talk about it.

[*Wiping* LAURA'S *eyes and kisses her.*]

LAURA [*with persistence*]. But perhaps it was true, and, Elfie —

ELFIE. Yes.

LAURA. I think I've stood this just as long as I can. Every day is a living horror.

ELFIE [*looking around room*]. It's the limit.

LAURA. I've got to have money to pay the rent. I've pawned everything I have, except the clothes on my back.

ELFIE. I'll give you all the money you need, dearie. Great Heavens, don't worry about that. Don't you care if I got sore and — and lost my head.

LAURA. No; I can't let you do that. [*Rises; crosses* L. *to table.*] You may have been mad, — awfully mad, — but what you said was the truth. I can't take your money. [*Sits* R. *of table.*]

ELFIE. Oh, forget that.

[*Rises, crosses to* C.]

LAURA. Maybe — maybe if he knew all about it — the suffering — he would n't blame me.

ELFIE. Who — the good man who wanted to lead you to the good life without even a bread-basket for an advance agent? Huh!

LAURA. Still he does n't know how desperately poor I am.

ELFIE. He knows you're out of work, don't he?

LAURA [*turning to* ELFIE]. Not exactly. I've let him think that I'm getting along all right.

ELFIE. Then you're a chump. Has n't he sent you anything?

LAURA. He has n't anything to send.

ELFIE. Well, what does he think you 're going to live on? — asphalt croquettes with conversation sauce?

LAURA. I don't know — I don't know.

[*Sobbing.*]

ELFIE [*crosses to* LAURA, *puts arms around her*]. Don't be foolish, dearie. You know there is somebody waiting for you — somebody who'll be good to you and get you out of this mess.

LAURA. You mean Will Brockton?

[*Looking up.*]

ELFIE. Yes.

LAURA. Do you know where he is?

ELFIE. Yes.

LAURA. Well?

ELFIE. You won't get sore again if I tell you, will you?

LAURA. No — why? [*Rises.*]

ELFIE. He's downstairs — waiting in the car. I promised to tell him what you said.

LAURA. Then it was all planned, and — and —

ELFIE. Now, dearie, I knew you were up against it, and I wanted to bring you two together. He's got half of the Burgess shows, and if you'll only see him everything will be fixed.

LAURA. When does he want to see me?

ELFIE. Now.

LAURA. Here?

ELFIE. Yes. Shall I tell him to come up?

LAURA [*after a long pause, crossing around to bed, down-stage side*]. Yes.

ELFIE [*suddenly becomes animated*]. Now you're a sensible dear. I'll bet he's half frozen down there. [*Goes to door.*] I'll send him up. Look at you, Laura, you're a sight. [*Crosses* L. *to* LAURA, *takes her by* R. *hand, leads her up to washstand, takes towel and wipes* LAURA'S *eyes.*] It'll never do to

have him see you looking like this; come over here and let me fix your eyes. Now, Laura, I want you to promise me you won't do any more crying. [*Leads* LAURA *over to dresser, takes powder-puff and powders* LAURA'S *face.*] Come over here and let me powder your nose. Now when he comes up you tell him he has got to blow us all off to a dinner to-night at Martin's, seven-thirty. Let me look at you. Now you're all right. [*After daubing* LAURA'S *face with rouge paw,* ELFIE *takes* LAURA'S *face in her hands and kisses her.*] Make it strong now, seven-thirty, don't forget, I'll be there. [*Crosses* R. *to armchair, gathers up muff, etc.*] So long. [*Exit* R.]

[*After* ELFIE'S *exit* LAURA *crosses slowly* R. *to wardrobe, pulls off picture of* JOHN, *crosses* L. *to dresser, takes picture of* JOHN *from there, carries both pictures over to bed, kneels on bed, pulls down picture at head of bed, places all three pictures under pillow.* WILL *is heard coming upstairs, and knocks.*]

LAURA. Come in.

[WILL *enters. His dress is that of a man of business, the time being about February. He is well groomed and brings with him the impression of easy luxury.*]

WILL [*as he enters*]. Hello, Laura.

[*There is an obvious embarrassment on the part of each of them. She rises, goes to him and extends her hand.*]

LAURA. I'm — I'm glad to see you, Will.

WILL. Thank you.

LAURA. Won't you sit down?

WILL [*regaining his ease of manner*]. Thank you again.

[*Puts hat and cane* R. *at end of wardrobe; removes overcoat and places on back of armchair; sits in armchair.*]

LAURA [*sits* R. *of table*]. It's rather cold out, is n't it?

WILL. Just a bit sharp.

LAURA. You came with Elfie in the car?

WILL. She picked me up at Martin's; we lunched there.

LAURA. By appointment?

WILL. I'd asked her.

LAURA. Well?

WILL. Well, Laura.

LAURA. She told you?

WILL. Not a great deal. What do you want to tell me?

LAURA [*very simply, and avoiding his glance*]. Will, I'm ready to come back.

WILL [*with an effort concealing his sense of triumph and satisfaction. Rises, crosses to* LAURA]. I'm mighty glad of that, Laura. I've missed you like the very devil.

LAURA. Do we — do we have to talk it over much?

[*Crosses to* L. *of table in front of bed.*]

WILL. Not at all unless you want to. I understand — in fact, I always have.

LAURA [*wearily*]. Yes, I guess you always did. I did n't.

[*Crosses* R. *and sits* F. *of table.*]

WILL. It will be just the same as it was before, you know.

LAURA. Yes.

WILL. I did n't think it was possible for me to miss anyone the way I have you. I've been lonely.

LAURA. That 's nice in you to say that.

WILL. You'll have to move out of here right away. [*Crossing up* L. *to back of table surveying room.*] This place is enough to give one the colly-wabbles. If you'll be ready to-morrow I'll send my man over to help you take care of the luggage.

LAURA. To-morrow will be all right, thank you.

WILL. And you'll need some money in the meantime. I'll leave this here.

[*He takes a roll of bills and places it on the bureau.*]

LAURA. You seem to have come prepared. Did Elfie and you plan this all out?

WILL. Not planned — just hoped. I think you'd better go to some nice hotel now. Later we can arrange.

[*Sits on up-stage side of bed.*]

LAURA. Will, we'll always be frank. I said I was ready to go. It's up to you — when and where.

WILL. The hotel scheme is the best, but, Laura —

LAURA. Yes?

WILL. You're quite sure this is in earnest. You don't want to change? You've time enough now.

LAURA. I've quite made up my mind. It's final.

WILL. If you want to work, Burgess has a nice part for you. I'll telephone and arrange if you say so.

LAURA. Thanks. Say I'll see him in the morning.

WILL. And, Laura, you know when we were in Denver, and —

LAURA [*rises hurriedly, crosses* R]. Please, please, don't speak of it.

WILL. I'm sorry, but I've got to. I told [*rises, crosses to* L. C.] Madison [LAURA *turns her head*] — pardon me, but I must do this — that if this time ever came I'd have you write him the truth. Before we go any further I'd like you to do that now.

LAURA. Say good-bye? [*Turns to* WILL.]

WILL. Just that.

LAURA. I would n't know how to begin. It will hurt him awfully deeply.

WILL. It'll be worse if you don't. He'll like you for telling him. It would be honest, and that is what he expects.

LAURA. Must I — now?

WILL. I think you should.

LAURA [*goes to table and sits down*]. How shall I begin, Will?

WILL [*standing back of table*]. You mean you don't know what to say?

LAURA. Yes.

WILL. Then I'll dictate.

LAURA. I'll do just as you say. You're the one to tell me now.

WILL. Address it the way you want to. [*She complies.*] I'm going to be pretty brutal. In the long run I think that is best, don't you?

LAURA. It's up to you.

WILL. Ready?

LAURA. Begin.

WILL [*dictating*]. "All I have to say can be expressed in one word, 'good-bye.' I shall not tell you where I've gone, but remind you of what Brockton told you the last time he saw you. He is here now [*pause*] dictating this letter. What I am doing is voluntary — my own suggestion. Don't grieve. Be happy and successful. I do not love you." —

[*She puts pen down, looks at him.*]

LAURA. Will — please.

WILL. It has got to go just that way — "I do not love you." Sign it "Laura." [*Does it.*] Fold it, put it in an envelope — seal it — address it. Now shall I mail it?

LAURA. No. If you don't mind I'd sooner. It's a sort of a last — last message.

WILL [*Crosses* R. *to armchair, gets coat, puts it on*]. All right. You're a little upset now, and I'm going. We are all to dine at Martin's to-night at seven-thirty. There'll be a party. Of course you'll come.

[*Gets hat and cane.*]

LAURA. I don't think I can. You see —

WILL. I know. I guess there's enough there [*indicating money*] for your immediate needs. Later you can straighten things up. Shall I send the car?

LAURA. Yes, please.

WILL. Good. It will be the first happy evening I've had in a long, long time. You'll be ready?

[*Approaches and bends over her as if to caress her.*]

LAURA [*shrinking away*]. Please don't. Remember we don't dine until seven-thirty.

WILL. All right. [*Exit.*]

[*For a moment* LAURA *sits silent, and then angrily rises, crosses up to dresser, gets alcohol lamp, crosses to table with lamp, lights same, and starts back to dresser. Knock at door.*]

LAURA. Come in. [ANNIE *enters, and stops.*] That you, Annie?

ANNIE. Yassum.

LAURA. Mrs. Farley wants her rent. There is some money [*tosses money on to table*]. Take it to her.

[ANNIE *goes to the table, examines the roll of bills and is palpably surprised.*]

ANNIE. Dey ain't nothin' heah, Miss Laura, but five great big one hunderd dollah bills.

LAURA. Take two. And look in that upper drawer. You'll find some pawn tickets there. [ANNIE *complies.*]

ANNIE. Yassum. [*Aside.*] Dat's real money — dem's yellow backs sure.

LAURA. Take the two top ones and go get my lace gown and one of the hats. The ticket is for a hundred and ten dollars. Keep ten for yourself, and hurry.

ANNIE [*aside*]. Ten for myself — I never see so much money. [*To* LAURA, *her astonishment nearly overcoming her.*] Yassum, Miss Laura, yassum. [*She goes toward door, and then turns to* LAURA.] Ah'm so mighty glad yo' out all yo' trouble, Miss Laura. I says to Mis' Farley now —

LAURA [*snapping her off*]. Don't — don't. Go do as I tell you and mind your business. [ANNIE *turns sullenly and walks toward the door. At that moment* LAURA *sees the letter, which she has thrown on the table.*] Wait a minute. I want you to mail a letter. [*By this time her hair is half down, hanging loosely over her shoulders. Her waist is open at the throat, collar off, and she has the appearance of a woman's untidiness when she is at that particular stage of her toilet. Hands letter to* ANNIE, *but snatches it away as* ANNIE *turns to go. She glances at the letter long and wistfully, and her nerve fails her.*] Never mind.

[ANNIE *exit. Slowly* LAURA *puts the letter over the flame of the alcohol lamp and it ignites. As it burns she holds it in her fingers, and when half consumed throws it into waste-jar, sits on side of bed watching letter burn, then lies down across bed on her elbows, her chin in her hands, facing audience. As the last flicker is seen the curtain slowly descends.*]

ACT III

SCENE. *Two months have elapsed. The scene is at* BROCKTON'S *apartment in a hotel such as is not over particular concerning the relations of its tenants. There are a number of these hotels throughout the theatre district of New York, and, as a rule, one will find them usually of the same type. The room in which this scene is placed is that of the general living-room in one of the handsomest apartments in the building. The prevailing color is green, and there is nothing particularly gaudy about the general furnishings. They are in good taste, but without the variety of arrangement and ornamentation which would naturally obtain in a room occupied by people a bit more particular concerning their surroundings. Down stage and just* R. *of* C. *is a table about three feet square which can be used not only as a general centre-table, but also for service while the occupants are eating. There is a breakfast service on this table, and also a tray and stand behind the table. There is a chair at either side of the table, and at right coming up stage, the room turns at a sharp angle of thirty-five degrees from 2 to 3, and this space is largely taken up by a large doorway. This is equipped with sliding-doors and hung with green portières, which are handsome and in harmony with the general scheme of the furnishings of the room. This entrance is to the sleeping-room of the apartments. At the back of stage is a large window or alcove. The window is on the ordinary plan, and the view through it shows the back of another building of New York, presumably a hotel of about the same character. Green portières are also hung on the windows. Down left is the entrance to the corridor of the hotel, and this must be so arranged that it works with a latch-key and opens upon a small hallway, which separates the apartment from the main hallway. This is necessary as the action calls for the slamming of a door and later the opening of the direct and intimate door of the apartment with a latch-key. At* L. *of* C. *is a sofa, and there is a general arrangement of chairs without overcrowding the apartment. Just below, where the right portière is hung, is a long full-length mirror, such as women dress by. Against* R. *flat, between 1 and 2, is a large lady's fancy dresser.*

To the immediate left of the sliding-doors, which go into the sleeping-apartment, is a lady's small writing-desk, with a practical drawer on the right-hand side, in which is a pearl-handled 32-calibre revolver. The front of the desk is open at rise. On top of the desk is a desk lamp and a large box of candy, inside the desk is writing material, &c. In pigeon-hole left there is a small photo and frame, which ANNIE *places on the table when*

she removes the breakfast set. In front of centre window in alcove is a small table on which is a parlor lamp, some newspapers, including the New York Sun. *On the floor running between the desk and table is a large fur rug. In front of the table is a small gilt chair; in front of desk there is also a small gilt chair; between left 2 and window there is a pianola piano, on top of which is a bundle of music-rolls. In place, ready to play, is a roll of a negro tune called "Bon-Bon Buddie, My Chocolate Drop." On top of the piano, in addition to the music-rolls, are a fancy lamp, a large basket of chrysanthemums, and two photos in frames, at the upper corner. Standing on the floor is a large piano lamp. On the sofa are cushions, and thrown over its back is a lady's opera-coat. On the sofa are also a fan and some small dinner favors.*

On the dresser are a lady's silver toilet set, including powder boxes, rouge boxes, manicuring implements, and a small plush black cat that might have been a favor at some time. Two little dolls hang on the side of the glass of the dresser, which also might have been favors. These are used later in the action, and are necessary.

At Rise. *When the curtain rises on this scene it is noticeable that the occupants of the room must have returned rather late at night, after having dined, not wisely, but too well. In the alcove is a man's dress-coat and vest thrown on the cushions in a most careless manner, a silk hat badly rumpled is near it. Over the top of sofa is an opera-cloak, and hung on the mirror is a huge hat, of the evening type, such as women would pay handsomely for. A pair of gloves is thrown on top of the pier-glass. The curtains in the bay-window are half drawn, and the light shades are half drawn down the windows, so that when the curtain goes up the place is in a rather dim light. On the table are the remains of a breakfast, which is served in a box-like tray such as is used in hotels.* Laura *is discovered sitting at* R. *of table, her hair a bit untidy. She has on a very expensive negligee gown.* Will, *in a business suit, is at the other side of the table, and both have evidently just about concluded their breakfast and are reading the newspapers while they sip their coffee.* Laura *is intent in the scanning of her* Morning Telegraph, *while* Will *is deep in the market reports of the* Journal of Commerce, *and in each instance these things must be made apparent.* Will *throws down the paper rather impatiently.*

Will. Have you seen the *Sun*, Laura?

Laura. No.

Will. Where is it?

Laura. I don't know.

Will [*in a loud voice*]. Annie, Annie! [*A pause.*] Annie! [*In an undertone, half directed to* Laura.] Where the devil is that nigger?

Laura. Why, I suppose she's at breakfast.

Will. Well, she ought to be here.

Laura. Did it ever occur to you that she has got to eat just the same as you have?

Will. She's your servant, is n't she?

Laura. My maid.

Will. Well, what have you got her for, — to eat or to wait on you? Annie!

Laura. Don't be so cross. What do you want?

Will. I want the *Sun*.

[Brockton *pours out one half glass of water from bottle.*]

Laura. I will get it for you.

[*Rather wearily she gets up and goes to the table* C. *where there are other morning papers, she takes the* Sun, *hands it to him, goes back to her seat, reopens the* Morning Telegraph. *There is a pause.* Annie *enters from the sleeping-room up* R.]

Annie. Do yuh want me, suh?

Will. Yes, I did want you, but don't now. When I'm at home I have a man to look after me and I get what I want.

Laura. For Heaven's sake, Will, have a little patience. If you like your man so well you had better live at home, but don't come around here with a grouch and bulldoze everybody.

Will. Don't think for a moment that there's much to come around here for. Annie, this room's stuffy.

Annie. Yassuh.

Will. Draw those portières. Let those

curtains up. [ANNIE *lets up curtain.*] Let's have a little light. Take away these clothes and hide them. Don't you know that a man does n't want to see the next morning anything to remind him of the night before. Make the place look a little respectable.

[*In the meantime* ANNIE *scurries around, picking up the coat and vest, opera-cloak, etc., as rapidly as possible and throwing them over her arm without any idea of order. It is very apparent that she is rather fearful of the anger of* WILL *while he is in this mood.*]

WILL [*looking at her*]. Be careful. You're not taking the wash off the line.

ANNIE. Yassuh.

[*Exit in confusion up* R.]

LAURA [*laying down paper and looking at* WILL]. Well, I must say you're rather amiable this morning.

WILL. I feel like hell.

LAURA. Market unsatisfactory?

WILL. No; head too big. [*He lights a cigar; as he takes a puff he makes an awful face.*] Tastes like punk.

[*Puts cigar into cup.*]

LAURA. You drank a lot.

WILL. We'll have to cut out those parties. I can't do those things any more. I'm not as young as I was, and in the morning it makes me sick. How do you feel?

LAURA. A little tired, that's all.

[*Rises, crosses to bureau.*]

WILL. You did n't touch anything?

LAURA. No.

WILL. I guess you're on the safe side. It was a great old party, though, was n't it?

LAURA. Did you think so?

WILL. Oh, for that sort of a blow-out. Not too rough, but just a little easy. I like them at night and I hate them in the morning. [*He picks up the paper and commences to glance it over in a casual manner, not interrupting his conversation.*] Were you bored?

LAURA. Yes; always at things like that.

WILL. Well, you don't have to go.

LAURA. You asked me.

WILL. Still, you could say no.

[LAURA *picks up paper, puts it on table up* C., *crosses back to bureau.*]

LAURA. But you asked me.

WILL. What did you go for if you did n't want to?

LAURA. *You* wanted me to.

WILL. I don't quite get you.

LAURA. Well, Will, you have all my time when I'm not in the theatre, and you can do with it just what you please. You pay for it. I'm working for you.

WILL. Is that all I've got, — just your time?

LAURA [*wearily*]. That and the rest. [LAURA *crosses up to desk, gets "part," crosses to sofa, turning pages of "part."*] I guess you know. [*Crosses to sofa and sits.*]

WILL [*looking at her curiously*]. Down in the mouth, eh? I'm sorry.

LAURA. No, only if you want me to be frank, I'm a little tired. You may not believe it, but I work awfully hard over at the theatre. Burgess will tell you that. I know I'm not so very good as an actress, but I try to be. [LAURA *lies down on sofa.*] I'd like to succeed, myself. They're very patient with me. Of course they've got to be, — that's another thing you're paying for, but I don't seem to get along except this way.

WILL. Oh, don't get sentimental. If you're going to bring up that sort of talk, Laura, do it sometime when I have n't got a hang-over, and then don't forget talk never does count for much.

[LAURA *crosses up to mirror* R. 3, *picks up hat from box, puts it on, looks in mirror. She turns around and looks at him steadfastly for a minute. During this entire scene, from the time the curtain rises, she must in a way indicate a premonition of an approaching catastrophe, a feeling, vague but nevertheless palpable, that something is going to happen. She must hold this before her audience so that she can show to them, without showing to him, the disgust she feels.* LAURA *has tasted of the privations of self-sacrifice during her struggle, and*

she has weakly surrendered and is unable to go back, but that brief period of self-abnegation has shown to her most clearly the rottenness of the other sort of living. There is enough sentimentality and emotion in her character to make it impossible for her to accept this manner of existence as ELFIE *does. Hers is not a nature of careless candor, but of dreamy ideals and better living, warped, handicapped, disillusioned, and destroyed by a weakness that finds its principal force in vanity.* WILL *resumes his newspaper in a more attentive way. The girl looks at him and expresses in pantomime, by the slightest gesture or shrug of the shoulders, her growing distaste for him and his way of living. In the meantime* WILL *is reading the paper rather carefully. He stops suddenly and then looks at his watch.*]

LAURA. What time is it?

WILL. After ten.

LAURA. Oh.

[WILL *at this moment particularly reads some part of the paper, turns to her with a keen glance of suspicion and inquiry, and then for a very short moment evidently settles in his mind a cross-examination. He has read in this paper a despatch from Chicago, which speaks of* JOHN MADISON *having arrived there as a representative of a big Western mining syndicate which is going to open large operations in the Nevada gold-fields, and representing* MR. MADISON *as being on his way to New York with sufficient capital to enlist more, and showing him to be now a man of means. The attitude of* LAURA *and the coincidence of the despatch bring back to* WILL *the scene in Denver, and later in New York, and with that subtle intuition of the man of the world he connects the two.*]

WILL. I don't suppose, Laura, that you'd be interested now in knowing anything about that young fellow out in Colorado? What was his name — Madison?

LAURA. Do you know anything?

WILL. No, nothing particularly. I've been rather curious to know how he came out. He was a pretty fresh young man and did an awful lot of talking. I wonder how he's doing and how he's getting along. I don't suppose by any chance you have ever heard from him?

LAURA. No, no; I've never heard.

[*Crosses to bureau.*]

WILL. I presume he never replied to that letter you wrote?

LAURA. No.

WILL. It would be rather queer, eh, if this young fellow should [*looks at paper*] happen to come across a lot of money — not that I think he ever could, but it would be funny, would n't it?

LAURA. Yes, yes; it would be unexpected. I hope he does. It might make him happy.

WILL. Think he might take a trip East and see you act. You know you've got quite a part now.

LAURA [*impatiently*]. I wish you would n't discuss this. Why do you mention it now? [*Crossing to* R. *of table.*] Is it because you were drinking last night and lost your sense of delicacy? You once had some consideration for me. What I've done I've done. I'm giving *you* all that I can. Please, please, don't hurt me any more than you can help. That's all I ask.

[*Crossing up to mirror* R. 3. *Crosses back to* R. *of table; sits.*]

WILL. Well, I'm sorry. I did n't mean that, Laura. I guess I am feeling a little bad to-day. Really, I don't want to hurt your feelings, my dear.

[*He gets up, goes to her, puts his hands on her shoulders, and his cheek close to the back of her head. She bends forward and shudders a little bit. It is very easy to see that the life she is leading is becoming intolerable to her.*]

WILL. You know, dearie, I do a lot for you because you've always been on the

level with me. I'm sorry I hurt you, but there was too much wine last night and I'm all upset. Forgive me.

[LAURA, *in order to avoid his caresses, has leaned forward, her hands are clasped between her knees, and she is looking straight outward with a cold, impassive expression.* WILL *regards her silently for a moment. Really in the man's heart there is an affection, and really he wants to try to comfort her; but he seems to realize that she has slipped away from the old environment and conditions, and that he simply bought her back; that he has n't any of her affection, even with his money; that she evinces toward him none of the old camaraderie; and it hurts him, as those things always hurt a selfish man, inclining him to be brutal and inconsiderate.* WILL *crosses* L. *to* C., *stands reading paper; bell rings, pause and second bell.* WILL *seizes upon this excuse to go up stage and over towards the door.*]

WILL [*after second bell*]. Damn that bell.

[*He continues on his way, he opens the door, leaves it open, and passes on to the outer door, which he opens.* LAURA *remains immovable and impassive with the same cold, hard expression on her face. He comes in slamming the outer door with effect, which one must have at this point of the play, because it is essential to a situation coming later. Enters the room, closes the door, and holds in his hand a telegram. Looks from newspaper to telegram.*]

WILL. A wire.

LAURA. For me?

WILL. Yes.

LAURA. From whom, I wonder. Perhaps Elfie with a luncheon engagement.

WILL [*handing to her*]. I don't know. Here.

[*Pauses up* C.; *he faces her, looking at her. She opens it quickly. She reads it and as she does, gasps quickly with an exclamation of fear and surprise. This is what the despatch says (it is dated at Buffalo and addressed to* LAURA): "*I will be in New York before noon. I'm coming to marry you and I'm coming with a bankroll. I wanted to keep it secret and have a big surprise for you, but I can't hold it any longer, because I feel just like a kid with a new top. Don't go out, and be ready for the big matrimonial thing. All my love. John.*"]

WILL. No bad news, I hope?

LAURA [*walking up stage rather hurriedly*]. No, no — not bad news.

WILL. I thought you were startled.

LAURA. No, not at all.

WILL [*looking at paper about where he had left off*]. From Elfie?

[*Crosses to and sits in armchair,* R. C.]

LAURA. No, just a friend.

WILL. Oh!

[*He makes himself rather comfortable in the chair, and* LAURA *regards him for a moment from up stage as if trying to figure out how to get rid of him.*]

LAURA. Won't you be rather late getting down town, Will?

WILL. Does n't make any difference. I don't feel much like the office now. Thought I might order the car and take a spin through the park. The cold air will do me a lot of good. Like to go?

LAURA. No, not to-day. I thought your business was important; you said so last night. [*Crosses* L. *to sofa, stands.*]

WILL. No hurry. Do you — er — want to get rid of me?

LAURA. Why should I?

WILL. Expecting someone?

LAURA. No — not exactly.

[*Crosses up to window.*]

WILL. If you don't mind, I'll stay here.

[*Lets curtain fly up.*]

LAURA. Just as you please. [*A pause. Crosses to piano; plays.*] Will?

WILL. Yes.

LAURA. How long does it take to come from Buffalo?

WILL. Depends on the train you take.

LAURA. About how long?

WILL. Between eight and ten hours, I think. Someone coming?

LAURA. Do you know anything about the trains?

WILL. Not much. Why don't you find out for yourself? Have Annie get the time-table?

LAURA. I will. Annie! Annie!

[*Rises from piano.* ANNIE *appears at doorway* R.]

ANNIE. Yassum!

LAURA. Go ask one of the hall-boys to bring me a New York Central time-table.

ANNIE. Yassum!

[*Crosses the stage and exit through door* L. LAURA *sits on* L. *arm of sofa.*]

WILL. Then you *do* expect someone, eh?

LAURA. Only one of the girls who used to be in the same company with me. But I'm not sure that she's coming here.

WILL. Then the wire was from her?

LAURA. Yes.

WILL. Did she say what train she was coming on?

LAURA. No.

WILL. Well, there are a lot of trains. About what time did you expect her in?

LAURA. She did n't say.

WILL. Do I know her?

LAURA. I think not. I met her while I worked in 'Frisco.

WILL. Oh! [*Resumes his paper.*]

[ANNIE *reënters with a time-table and hands it to* LAURA.]

LAURA. Thanks, take those breakfast things away, Annie. [*Sits on sofa.*]

[ANNIE *complies; takes them across stage, opens the door leading to the corridor, exit.* LAURA *in the meantime is studying the time-table.*]

LAURA. I can't make this out.

WILL. Give it here; maybe I can help you.

[LAURA *crosses to* R. *of table and sits opposite* WILL, *and hands him the time-table. He takes it and handles it as if he were familiar with it.*]

WILL. Where is she coming from?

LAURA. The West; the telegram was from Buffalo. I suppose she was on her way when she sent it.

WILL. There's a train comes in here at 9.30 — that's the Twentieth Century, that does n't carry passengers from Buffalo; then there's one at 11.41; one at 1.49; another at 3.45; another at 5.40; and another at 5.48 — that's the Lake Shore Limited, a fast train; and all pass through Buffalo. Did you think of meeting her?

LAURA. No. She'll come here when she arrives.

WILL. Knows where you live?

LAURA. She has the address.

WILL. Ever been to New York before?

LAURA. I think not.

WILL [*passing her the time-table*]. Well, that's the best I can do for you.

LAURA. Thank you.

[*Crosses up, puts time-table in desk.*]

WILL [*takes up the paper again.* LAURA *looks at clock*]. By George, this is funny.

LAURA. What?

WILL. Speak of the devil, you know.

LAURA. Who?

WILL. Your old friend Madison.

LAURA [*utters a slight exclamation and makes an effort to control herself*]. What — what about him?

WILL. He's been in Chicago.

LAURA. How do you know?

WILL. Here's a despatch about him.

LAURA [*coming quickly over to him, looking over his shoulder*]. What — where — what's it about?

WILL. Well, I'm damned if he has n't done what he said he'd do — see! [*Holds the paper so that she can see.* LAURA *takes paper.*] He's been in Chicago, and is on his way to New York. He's struck it rich in Nevada and is coming with a lot of money. Queer, is n't it? [LAURA *puts paper on table.*] Did you know anything about it?

[*Lights cigarette.*]

LAURA. No, no; nothing at all.

[*Crosses to bureau.*]

WILL. Lucky for him, eh?

LAURA. Yes, yes; it's very nice.

WILL. Too bad he could n't get this a little sooner, eh, Laura?

LAURA. Oh, I don't know — I don't think it's too bad. What makes you ask?

WILL. Oh, nothing. I suppose he ought to be here to-day. Are you going to see him if he looks you up?

LAURA. No, no; I don't want to see him. You know that, don't you, that I don't want to see him? What makes you ask these questions? [*Crosses to sofa and sits.*]

WILL. Just thought you might meet him, that's all. Don't get sore about it.

LAURA. I'm not.

[*She holds the telegram crumpled in one hand.* WILL *lays down the paper, and regards* LAURA *curiously. She sees the expression on his face and averts her head in order not to meet his eye.*]

LAURA. What are you looking at me that way for?

WILL. I was n't conscious that I was looking at you in any particular way — why?

LAURA. Oh, nothing. I guess I'm nervous, too. [*Lies on sofa.*]

WILL. I dare say you are. [*A pause.*]

LAURA. Yes, I am.

[WILL *crosses up to* LAURA.]

WILL. You know I don't want to delve into a lot of past history at this time, but I've got to talk to you for a moment.

LAURA. Why don't you do it some other time? I don't want to be talked to now.

[*Rises, crosses a little to* L.]

WILL. But I've got to do it just the same.

LAURA [*trying to effect an attitude of resigned patience and resignation*]. Well, what is it? [*Resuming seat on sofa.*]

WILL. You've always been on the square with me, Laura. That's why I've liked you a lot better than the other women.

LAURA. Are you going into all that again now, this morning? I thought we understood each other.

WILL. So did I, but somehow I think that maybe we *don't* quite understand each other.

LAURA. In what way? [*Turns to* WILL.]

WILL [*looking her straight in the eye*]. That letter I dictated to you the day that you came back to me, and left it for you to mail — did you mail it?

LAURA. Yes.

WILL. You're quite sure?

LAURA. Yes, I'm quite sure. I would n't say so if I was n't.

WILL. And you did n't know Madison was coming East until you read about it in that newspaper?

LAURA. No — no, I did n't know.

WILL. Have you heard from him?

LAURA. No — no — I have n't heard from him. Don't talk to me about this thing. Why can't you leave me alone? I'm miserable enough as it is.

[*Crossing to extreme* R.]

WILL [*crossing to table* R.]. But I've got to talk to you. Laura, you're lying to me.

LAURA. What!

[*She makes a valiant effort to become angry.*]

WILL. You're lying to me, and you've been lying to me, and I've trusted you. Show me that telegram!

LAURA. No.

WILL [*going over towards her*]. Show me that telegram!

[LAURA *crosses up to doors leading into bedroom.*]

LAURA [*tears telegram in half*]. You've no right to ask me.

WILL. Are you going to make me take it away [LAURA *crosses* L. *to window*] from you? I've [*crosses* L. *to sofa*] never laid my hands on you yet.

LAURA. It's my business.

[*Crossing to* L. *of sofa around it on down-stage side.*]

WILL. Yes, and it's mine.

[*During scene. Backing away from* WILL, *he is following her.* LAURA *backs against bureau.* WILL *grabs her and attempts to take telegram from her. She has put it in the front of waist. She slowly draws it out.*]

WILL. That telegram's from Madison. Give it here!

LAURA. No.

WILL. I'm going to find out where I stand. Give me that telegram, or I'll take it away from you.

LAURA. No.

WILL. Come on!

LAURA. I'll give it to you.

[*Takes telegram out of waist, hands it to him. He takes it slowly, looking her squarely in the eye.* WILL *crosses to* C. *and does not glance away while he slowly smooths it out so that it can be read; when he finally takes it in both hands to read it she staggers back a step or two weakly.*]

WILL [*then reads the telegram aloud*]. "I will be in New York before noon. I'm coming to marry you, and I'm coming with a bank-roll. I wanted to keep it a secret and have a big surprise for you, but I can't hold it any longer, because I feel just like a kid with a new top. Don't go out, and be ready for the big matrimonial thing. All my love. John." Then you knew?

LAURA. Yes.

WILL. But you did n't know he was coming until this arrived?

LAURA. No.

WILL. And you did n't mail the letter [*tossing telegram on table* R.], did you?

LAURA. No.

WILL. What did you do with it?

LAURA. I — I burned it.

WILL. Why? [LAURA *is completely overcome and unable to answer.*] Why?

LAURA. I — I could n't help it — I simply could n't help it.

WILL. So you've been corresponding all this time.

LAURA. Yes.

WILL. And he does n't know [*with a gesture around the room, indicating the condition in which they live*] about us?

LAURA. No.

WILL [*taking a step towards her*]. By God, I never beat a woman in my life, but I feel as though I could wring your neck.

LAURA. Why don't you? You've done everything else. Why don't you?

WILL. Don't you know that I gave Madison my word that if you came back to me I'd let him know? Don't you know that I like that young fellow and I wanted to protect him, and did everything I could to help him? And do you know what you've done to me? You've made me out a liar — you've made me lie to a man — a man — you understand. What are you going to do now? Tell me — what are you going to do now? Don't stand there as if you've lost your voice — how are you going to square me?

LAURA. I'm not thinking about squaring you. What am I going to do for him?

WILL. Not what *you* are going to do for him — what am *I* going to do for him. Why, I could n't have that young fellow think that I tricked him into this thing for you or all the rest of the women of your kind on earth. God! I might have known that you, and the others like you, could n't be square. [*The girl looks at him dumbly. He glances at his watch, walks up stage, looks out of the window, comes down again, goes to the table, and looks at her across it.*] You've made a nice mess of it, have n't you?

LAURA [*weakly*]. There is n't any mess. Please go away. He'll be here soon. Please let *me* see him — please do that.

WILL. No, I'll wait. This time I'm going to tell him myself, and I don't care how tough it is.

LAURA [*immediately regaining all her vitality*]. No, you must n't do that. [*Crossing up* R. *back of table to* C.] Oh, Will, I'm not offering any excuse. I'm not saying anything, but I'm telling you the truth. I could n't give him up — I could n't do it. I love him.

WILL. Huh.

[*Grins, crosses* L. *to front of sofa.*]

LAURA. Don't you think so? I know you can't see what I see, but I do. And why can't you go away? Why can't you leave me this? It's all I ever had. He does n't know. No one will ever tell him. I'll take him away. It's the best for him — it's the best for me. Please go.

WILL. Why — do you think that I'm going to let you trip him the way you tripped me? [*Crosses and sits in armchair.*] No. I'm going to stay right here until that young man arrives, and I'm going to tell him that it was n't my fault. You were to blame.

LAURA. Then you are going to let him know. You're not going to give me a single, solitary chance?

WILL. I'll give you every chance that you deserve when he knows. Then he can do as he pleases, but there must be no more deception, that's flat.

[LAURA *crosses* R. *and kneels beside* WILL'S *chair.*]

LAURA. Then you must let me tell him — [WILL *turns away impatiently*] — yes, you must. If I did n't tell him before, I'll do it now. You must go. If you ever had any regard for me — if you ever had any affection — if you ever had any friendship, please let me do this now. I want you to go — you can come back. Then you'll see — you'll know — only I want to try to make him understand that — that maybe if I am weak I'm not vicious. I want to let him know that I did n't want to do it, but I could n't help it. Just give me the chance to be as good as I can be. [WILL *gives her a look.*] Oh, I promise you, I will tell him, and then — then I don't care what happens — only he must learn everything from me — please — please — let me do this — it's the last favor I shall ever — ever ask of you. Won't you?

[LAURA *breaks down and weeps.*]

WILL [*rising, looks at her a moment as if mentally debating the best thing to do. Crosses* R. *in front of table, stands facing her with back to audience*]. All right, I won't be unkind. I'll be back early this afternoon, and just remember, this is the time you'll have to go right through to the end. Understand?

LAURA. Yes, I'll do it, — all of it. Won't you please go — now?

[*Crosses; sits* R. C. *in armchair.*]

WILL. All right. [*He exits into the bedroom and immediately enters again with overcoat on his arm and hat in hand; he goes* C., *and turns.*] I am sorry for you, Laura, but remember you've got to tell the truth.

LAURA [*who is sitting in a chair looking straight in front of her with a set expression*]. Please go. [WILL *exit door* L.]

[LAURA *sits in a chair in a state of almost stupefaction, holding this attitude as long as possible.* ANNIE *enters* L., *and in a characteristic manner begins her task of tidying up the room;* LAURA, *without changing her attitude and staring straight in front of her, her elbows between her knees and her chin on her hands.*]

LAURA. Annie!

ANNIE. Yassum.

LAURA. Do you remember in the boarding-house — when we finally packed up — what you did with everything?

ANNIE. Yassum.

LAURA. You remember that I used to keep a pistol?

ANNIE. Yo' all mean dat one yo' say dat gemman out West gave yuh once?

LAURA. Yes.

ANNIE. Yassum, Ah 'membuh it.

LAURA. Where is it now?

ANNIE [*crosses to writing-desk*]. Last Ah saw of it was in dis heah draw' in de writin'-desk. [*This speech takes her across to desk, she opens the drawer, fumbles among a lot of old papers, letters, etc., and finally produces a small thirty-two calibre, and gingerly crosses to* LAURA.] Is dis it?

LAURA [*slowly turns around and looks at it*]. Yes. Put it back. I thought perhaps it was lost. [ANNIE *complies when the bell rings.* LAURA *starts suddenly, involuntarily gathering her negligée gown closer to her figure, and at once she is under a great stress of emotion, and sways upon her feet to such an extent that she is obliged to put one hand out on to the table to maintain her balance. When she speaks, it is with a certain difficulty of articulation.*] See — who — that is — and let me know.

ANNIE [*turning*]. Yassum.

[*Crosses, opens the first door, and afterwards opens the second door.*]

ELFIE'S VOICE [*off stage*]. Hello, Annie, — folks home?

ANNIE. Yassum, she's in.

[LAURA *immediately evinces her tremendous relief, and* ELFIE, *without waiting for a reply, has shoved* ANNIE *aside and enters,* ANNIE *following and closing the door.* ELFIE *is beautifully gowned in a morning dress with an overabundance of fur trim-*

mings and all the furbelows that would accompany the extravagant raiment generally affected by a woman of that type. ELFIE *approaching effusively.*]

ELFIE. Hello, dearie.

LAURA. Hello, Elfie.

[LAURA *crosses and sits on sofa.* ELFIE *puts muff, etc., on table* R.]

ELFIE. It's a bully day out. [*Crossing to bureau, looking in mirror.*] I've been shopping all morning long; just blew myself until I'm broke, that's all. My goodness, don't you ever get dressed? Listen. [*Crosses* L. *of table to* C.] Talk about cinches. I copped out a gown, all ready made and fits me like the paper on the wall, for $37.80. Looks like it might have cost $200. Anyway I had them charge $200 on the bill, and I kept the change. There are two or three more down town there, and I want you to go down and look them over. Models, you know, being sold out. I don't blame you for not getting up earlier. [*She sits at the table, not noticing* LAURA.] That was some party last night. I know you did n't drink a great deal, but gee! what an awful tide Will had on. How do you feel? [*Looks at her critically.*] What's the matter, are you sick? You look all in. What you want to do is this — put on your duds and go out for an hour. It's a perfectly grand day out. My Gaud! how the sun does shine! Clear and cold. [*A pause.*] Well, much obliged for the conversation. Don't I get a "Good-morning," or a "How-dy-do," or a something of that sort?

LAURA. I'm tired, Elfie, and blue — terribly blue.

ELFIE [*rises, crosses to* LAURA]. Well now, you just brace up and cut out all that emotional stuff. I came down to take you for a drive. You'd like it; just through the park. Will you go?

LAURA [*going* R. *up stage*]. Not this morning, dear; I'm expecting somebody.

ELFIE. A man?

LAURA [*finding it almost impossible to suppress a smile*]. No, a gentleman.

ELFIE. Same thing. Do I know him?

LAURA. You've heard of him.

[*At desk looking at clock.*]

ELFIE. Well, don't be so mysterious. Who is he?

LAURA. What is your time, Elfie?

ELFIE [*looks at her watch*]. Five minutes past eleven.

LAURA. Oh, I'm slow. I did n't know it was so late. Just excuse me, won't you, while I get some clothes on. He may be here any moment. Annie!

[*She goes up stage towards portières.*]

ELFIE. Who?

LAURA. I'll tell you when I get dressed. Make yourself at home, won't you, dear?

ELFIE. I'd sooner hear. What is the scandal anyway?

LAURA [*as she goes out*]. I'll tell you in a moment. Just as soon as Annie gets through with me. [*Exit* R. *upper.*]

ELFIE [*gets candy-box off desk, crosses, sits on* R. *arm of sofa selecting candy. In a louder voice*]. Do you know, Laura, I think I'll go back on the stage.

LAURA [*off stage*]. Yes?

ELFIE. Yes, I'm afraid I'll have to. I think I need a sort of a boost to my popularity.

LAURA. How a boost, Elfie?

ELFIE. I think Jerry is getting cold feet. He's seeing a little too much of me [*places candy-box on sofa*] nowadays.

LAURA. What makes you think that?

ELFIE. I think he is getting a relapse of that front-row habit. There's no use in talking, Laura, it's a great thing for a girl's credit when a man like Jerry can take two or three friends to the theatre, and when you make your entrance delicately point to you with his forefinger and say, "The third one from the front on the left belongs to muh." The old fool's hanging around some of these musical comedies lately, and I'm getting a little nervous every time rent day comes.

LAURA. Oh, I guess you'll get along all right, Elfie.

ELFIE [*with serene self-satisfaction*]. Oh, that's a cinch [*rises, crosses* R. *to table, looking in dresser mirror at herself, and giving her hat and hair little touches*], but I like to leave well enough alone, and if I had to make a change right now it would require a whole lot of thought and attention, to

say nothing of the inconvenience, and I'm so nicely settled in my flat. [*She sees the pianola.*] Say, dearie, when did you get the piano player? I got one of them phonographs [*crosses* L. *to pianola, tries the levers, etc.*], but this has got that beat a city block. How does it work? What did it cost?

LAURA. I don't know.

ELFIE. Well, Jerry's got to stake me to one of these. [*Looks over the rolls on top. Mumbles to herself.*] "Tannhäuser, William Tell, Chopin." [*Then louder.*] Listen, dear. Ain't you got anything else except all this high-brow stuff?

LAURA. What do you want?

ELFIE. Oh, something with a regular tune to it [*looks at empty box on pianola*]. Oh, here's one; just watch me tear this off. [*The roll is the tune of "Bon-Bon Buddie, My Chocolate Drop." She starts to play and moves the lever marked "Swell" wide open, increases the tempo, and is pumping with all the delight and enthusiasm of a child.*] Ain't it grand?

LAURA. Gracious, Elfie, don't play so loud. What's the matter?

ELFIE. I shoved over that thing marked "Swell." [*Stops and turns. Rises, crosses to* L. C., *stands.*] I sure will have to speak to Jerry about this. I'm stuck on that swell thing. Hurry up. [LAURA *appears.*] Gee! you look pale. [*And then in a tone of sympathy:*] I'll [*crosses to* C.] just bet you and Will have had a fight, and he always gets the best of you, does n't he, dearie? [LAURA *crosses to dresser* R. *and busies herself.*] Listen. Don't you think you can ever get him trained? I almost threw Jerry down the stairs the other night and he came right back with a lot of American beauties and a check. I told him if he did n't look out I'd throw him downstairs every night. He's getting too damned independent and it's got me nervous. Oh, dear, I s'pose I will have to go back on the stage.

[*Sits in armchair* R. C.]

LAURA. In the chorus?

ELFIE. Well, I should say not! I'm going to give up my musical career. Charlie Burgess is putting on a new play, and he says he has a part in it for me if I want to go back. It is n't much, but very important, — sort of a pantomime part. A lot of people talk about me and just at the right time I walk across the stage and make an awful hit. I told Jerry that if I went [LAURA *crosses to sofa, picks up candy-box, puts it upon desk, gets telegram off table* R., *crosses to* R. C.] on he'd have to come across with one of those Irish crochet lace gowns. He fell for it. Do you know, dearie, I think he'd sell out his business just to have me back on the stage for a couple of weeks, just to give box parties every night for my *en*-trance and *ex*-its.

LAURA [*seriously*]. Elfie!

[LAURA *takes* ELFIE *by the hand, leads her over to sofa.* LAURA *sits,* ELFIE *standing* L. C.]

ELFIE. Yes, dear.

LAURA. Come over here and sit down.

ELFIE. What's up?

LAURA. Do you know what I'm going to ask of you?

ELFIE. If it's a touch, you'll have to wait until next week.

[*Sits opposite* LAURA.]

LAURA. No; just a little advice.

ELFIE [*with a smile*]. Well, that's cheap, and Lord knows you need it. What's happened?

[LAURA *takes the crumpled and torn telegram that* WILL *has left on the table and hands it to* ELFIE. *The latter puts the two pieces together, reads it very carefully, looks up at* LAURA *about middle of telegram, and lays it down.*]

ELFIE. Well?

LAURA. Will suspected. There was something in the paper about Mr. Madison — the telegram came — then we had a row.

ELFIE. Serious?

LAURA. Yes. Do you remember what I told you about that letter — the one Will made me write — I mean to John — telling him what I had done?

ELFIE. Yes, you burned it.

LAURA. I tried to lie to Will — he would n't have it that way. He seemed to know. He was furious.

ELFIE. Did he hit you?

LAURA. No; he made me admit that John did n't know, and then he said he'd

stay here and tell himself that I'd made him lie, and then he said something about liking the other man and wanting to save him.

ELFIE. Save — shucks! He's jealous.

LAURA. I told him if he'd only go I'd — tell John myself when he came, and now you see I'm waiting — and I've got to tell — and — and I don't know how to begin — and — and I thought you could help me — you seem so sort of resourceful, and it means — it means so much to me. If John turned on me now I could n't go back to Will, and, Elfie, — I don't think I'd care to — stay here any more.

ELFIE. What! [*In an awestruck tone, taking* LAURA *in her arms impulsively.*] Dearie, get that nonsense out of your head and be sensible. I'd just like to see any two men who could make me think about — well — what you seem to have in your mind.

LAURA. But I don't know; don't you see, Elfie, I don't know. If I don't tell him Will will come back and he'll tell him, and I know John, and maybe — Elfie, do you know, I think John would kill him.

ELFIE. Well, don't you think anything about that. Now let's get [*rises, crosses to armchair, draws it over a little, sits on* L. *arm*] down to cases, and we have n't much time Business is business, and love is love. You're long on love and I'm long on business, and between the two of us we ought to straighten this thing out. Now, evidently John is coming on here to marry you.

LAURA. Yes.

ELFIE. And you love him?

LAURA. Yes.

ELFIE. And as far as you know the moment that he comes in here it's quick to the justice and a big matrimonial thing.

LAURA. Yes, but you see how impossible it is —

ELFIE. I don't see anything impossible. From all you've said to me about this fellow there is only one thing to do.

LAURA. One thing?

ELFIE. Yes — get married quick. You say he has the money and you have the love, and you're sick of Brockton, and you want to switch and do it in the decent, respectable, conventional way, and he's going to take you away. Have n't you got sense enough to know that once you're married to Mr. Madison that Will Brockton would n't dare go to him, and if he did Madison would n't believe him. A man will believe a whole lot about his girl, but nothing about his wife.

LAURA [*turns and looks at her. There is a long pause*]. Elfie [*rises, crosses to* R. *of table*] — I — I don't think I could do like that to John. I don't think — I could deceive him.

ELFIE. You make me sick. The thing to do is to lie to all men [*rises, pushes chair to table*] — they all lie to you. Protect yourself. You seem to think that your happiness depends on this. Now do it. Listen. [*Touches* LAURA *to make her sit down;* LAURA *sits* R. *of table;* ELFIE *sits on* R. *arm of chair* L. *of table, elbows on table.*] Don't you realize that you and me, and all the girls that are shoved into this life, are practically the common prey of any man who happens to come along? Don't you know that they've got about as much consideration for us as they have for any pet animal around the house, and the only way that we've got it on the animal is that we've got brains. This is a game, Laura, *not a sentiment.* Do you suppose this Madison [LAURA *turns to* ELFIE] — now don't get sore — has n't turned these tricks himself before he met you, and I'll gamble he's done it since. A man's natural trade is a heartbreaking business. Don't tell me about women breaking men's hearts. The only thing they can ever break is their bank-roll. And besides, this is not Will's business; he has no right to interfere. You've been with him — yes, and he's been nice to you; but I don't think that he's given you any the best of it. Now if you want to leave and go your own way and marry any Tom, Dick, or Harry that you want, it's nobody's affair but yours.

LAURA. But you don't understand — it's John. I can't lie to him.

ELFIE. Well, that's too bad about you. I used to have that truthful habit myself, and the best I ever got was the worst of it. All this talk about love and loyalty and

constancy is fine and dandy in a book, but when a girl has to look out for herself, take it from me, whenever you've got that trump card up your sleeve just play it and rake in the pot. [*Takes* LAURA'S *hand affectionately.*] You know, dearie, you're just about the only one in the world I love.

LAURA. Elfie!

ELFIE. Since I broke away from the folks up state and they've heard things, there ain't any more letters coming to me with an Oswego postmark. Ma's gone, and the rest don't care. You're all I've got in the world, Laura, and what I'm asking you to do is because I want to see you happy. I was afraid this thing was coming off, and the thing to do now is to grab your happiness, no matter how you get it nor where it comes from. There ain't a whole lot of joy in this world for you and me and the others we know, and what little you get you've got to take when you're young, because when those gray hairs begin to come, and the make-up is n't going to hide the wrinkles, unless you're well fixed it's going to be hell. You know what a fellow does n't know does n't hurt him, and he'll love you just the same and you'll love him. As for Brockton, let him get another girl; there're plenty 'round. Why, if this chance came to me I'd tie a can to Jerry so quick that you could hear it rattle all the way down Broadway. [*Rises, crosses back of table to* LAURA, *leans over back of chair, and puts arms around her neck very tenderly.*] Dearie, promise me that you won't be a damn fool.

[*The bell rings; both start.*]

LAURA [*rises*]. Maybe that's John.

[ELFIE *brushes a tear quickly from her eye.*]

ELFIE. Oh! And you'll promise me, Laura?

LAURA. I'll try. [ANNIE *enters up stage from the adjoining room and crosses to the door.*] If that's Mr. Madison, Annie, tell him to come in.

[*She stands near the table, almost rigid. Instinctively* ELFIE *goes to the mirror and rearranges her gown and hair as* ANNIE *exit.* ELFIE *turns to* LAURA.]

ELFIE. If I think he's the fellow when I see him, watch me and I'll tip you the wink.

[*Kisses* LAURA, *crosses* C. *up, puts on coat. She goes up stage to* C. LAURA *remains in her position. The doors are heard to open, and in a moment* JOHN *enters. He is dressed very neatly in a business suit and his face is tanned and weather-beaten. After he enters he stands still for a moment. The emotion that both he and* LAURA *go through is such that each is trying to control it,* LAURA *from the agony of her position and* JOHN *from the mere hurt of his affection. He sees* ELFIE *and forces a smile.*]

JOHN [*quietly*]. Hello, Laura! I'm on time.

[LAURA *smiles and quickly crosses the stage and holds out her hand.*]

LAURA. Oh, John, I'm so glad — so glad to see you. [*They hold this position for a moment looking into each other's eyes.* ELFIE *moves so as to take* JOHN *in from head to toe and is obviously very much pleased with his appearance. She coughs slightly.* LAURA *takes a step back with a smile.*] Oh, pardon me, John — one of my dearest friends, Miss Sinclair; she's heard a lot about you.

[ELFIE, *with a slight gush, in her most captivating manner, goes over and holds out her gloved hand laden with bracelets, and with her sweetest smile crosses to* L. C.]

ELFIE. How do you do?

MADISON. I'm glad to meet you, I'm sure.

ELFIE [*still holding* JOHN'S *hand*]. Yes, I'm sure you are — particularly just at this time. [*To* LAURA.] You know that old stuff about two's company and three [LAURA *smiles*] is a crowd. Here's where I vamoose. [*Crosses to door,* L.]

LAURA [*as* ELFIE *goes toward door*]. Don't hurry, dear.

ELFIE [*with a grin*]. No, I suppose not; just fall down stairs and get out of the way, that's all. [*Crosses* R. *to* JOHN.] Anyway, Mr. Madison, I'm awfully glad to have met you, and I want to congratulate you. They tell me you're rich.

JOHN. Oh, no; not rich.

ELFIE. Well, I don't believe you — anyway I'm going. Ta-ta, dearie. Good-bye, Mr. Madison.

JOHN. Good-bye.

[JOHN *crosses up to back of sofa, removes coat, puts it on sofa.*]

ELFIE [*goes to the door, opens it and turns.* JOHN'S *back is partly toward her and she gives a long wink at* LAURA, *snapping fingers to attract* LAURA'S *attention*]. I must say, Laura, that when it comes to picking live ones, you certainly can go some. [*Exit.*]

[*After this remark both turn toward her and both smile. After* ELFIE *exit,* JOHN *turns to* LAURA *with a pleasant smile, and jerks his head towards the door where* ELFIE *has gone out.*]

JOHN. I bet she's a character.

LAURA. She's a dear.

JOHN. I can see that all right.

[*Crossing to* C.]

LAURA. She's been a very great friend to me.

JOHN. That's good, but don't I get a "how-dy-do," or a hand-shake, or a little kiss? You know I've come a long way.

[LAURA *goes to him and places herself in his arms; he kisses her affectionately. During all this scene between them the tenderness of the man is very apparent. As she releases herself from his embrace he takes her face in his hands and holds it up towards his.*]

JOHN. I'm not much on the love-making business, Laura, but I never thought I'd be as happy as I am now. [JOHN *and* LAURA *cross to* R. C. LAURA *kneels in armchair with back to audience,* JOHN *stands* L.] I've been counting mileposts ever since I left Chicago, and it seemed like as if I had to go 'round the world before I got here.

LAURA. You never told me about your good fortune. If you had n't telegraphed I would n't even have known you were coming.

JOHN. I did n't want you to. I'd made up my mind to sort of drop in here and give you a great big surprise, — a happy one, I knew, — but the papers made such a fuss in Chicago that I thought you might have read about it — did you?

LAURA. No.

JOHN. Gee! fixed up kind o' scrumptious, ain't you? [*Crosses* L. *in front of sofa, around behind it to* C., *surveying rooms.*] Maybe you've been almost as prosperous as I have.

LAURA. You can get a lot of gilt and cushions in New York at half price, and besides, I've got a pretty good part now.

JOHN. Of course I know that, but I did n't think it would make you quite so comfortable. Great, ain't it?

LAURA. Yes.

JOHN [*standing beside her chair, with a smile*]. Well, are you ready?

LAURA. For what, dear?

[*Looking up at him.*]

JOHN. You know what I said in the telegram?

LAURA. Yes.

[*Leans her head affectionately on his shoulder.*]

JOHN. Well, I meant it.

LAURA. I know.

JOHN. I've got to get back [JOHN *looks around, crosses behind table to chair* R. *of table, sits facing her across table*], Laura, just as soon as ever I can. There's a lot of work to be done out in Nevada and I stole away to come to New York. I want to take you back. Can you go?

LAURA. Yes — when?

JOHN. This afternoon. We'll take the eighteen-hour train to Chicago, late this afternoon, and connect at Chicago with the Overland, and I'll soon have you in a home. [*Pause.*] And here's another secret.

LAURA. What, dear?

JOHN. I've got that home all bought and furnished, and while you could n't call it a Fifth Avenue residence, still it has got something on any other one in town.

LAURA. But, John, you've been so mysterious. In all your letters you have n't told me a single, solitary thing about your good luck.

JOHN. I've planned to take you out and show you all that.

LAURA. You should have told me, I've been so anxious.

JOHN. I waited until it was a dead-sure thing. You know it's been pretty tough sledding out there in the mining country, and it did look as if I never would make a strike; but your spirit was with me and luck was with me, and I knew if I could only hold out that something would come my way. I had two pals, both of them miners, — they had the knowledge and I had the luck, — and one day, clearing away a little snow to build a fire, I poked my toe into the dirt, and there was somethin' there, dearie, that looked suspicious. I called Jim, — that's one of the men, — and in less time than it takes to tell you there were three maniacs scratching away at old mother earth for all there was in it. We staked our claims in two weeks, and I came to Reno to raise enough money for me to come East. Now things are all fixed and it's just a matter of time.

[*Taking* LAURA'S *hand.*]

LAURA. So you're very, very rich, dear?

JOHN. Oh, not rich [*releasing her hand he leans back in his chair*], just heeled. I'm not going down to the Wall Street bargain counter and buy the Union Pacific, or anything like that; but we won't have to take the trip on tourists' tickets, and there's enough money to make us comfortable all the rest of our lives.

LAURA. How hard you must have worked and suffered.

JOHN. Nobody else ever accused me of that, but I sure will have to plead guilty to you. [*Rises, stands at* R. *upper side of table.*] Why, dear, since the day you came into my life hell-raising took a sneak out the back door and God poked His toe in the front, and ever since then I think He's been coming a little closer to me. [*Crossing to* R. C.] I used to be a fellow without much faith and kidded everybody who had it, and I used to say to those who prayed and believed, "You may be right, but show me a message." You came along and you brought that little document in your sweet face and your dear love. Laura, you turned the trick for me, and I think I'm almost a regular man now.

[LAURA *turns away in pain; the realization of all she is to* JOHN *weighs heavily upon her. She almost loses her nerve, and is on the verge of not going through with her determination to get her happiness at any price.*]

LAURA. John, please, don't. I'm not worth it. [*Rises, crosses to* R.]

JOHN [*with a light air*]. Not worth it? Why, you're worth [*crossing behind table* R. *stands behind* LAURA] that and a whole lot more. And see how you've got on! Brockton told me you never could get along in your profession, but I knew you could. [*Crosses to* R. *back of* LAURA, *takes her by the shoulders, shakes her playfully.*] I knew what you had in you, and here you are. You see, if my foot had n't slipped on the right ground and kicked up pay-dirt, you'd been all right. You succeeded and I succeeded, but I'm going to take you away; and after a while when things sort of smooth out, and it's all clear where the money's [*crosses to sofa and sits*] coming from, we're going to move back here, and go to Europe, and just have a great time, like a couple of good pals.

LAURA [*slowly crosses to* JOHN]. But if I had n't succeeded and if things — things were n't just as they seem — would it make any difference to you, John?

JOHN. Not the least in the world. [*He takes her in his arms and kisses her, drawing her on to sofa beside him.*] Now don't you get blue. I should not have surprised you this way. It's taken you off your feet. [*He looks at his watch, rises, crosses* L. *behind sofa, gets overcoat.*] But we've not any time to lose. How soon can you get ready?

LAURA [*kneeling on sofa, leaning over back*]. You mean to go?

JOHN. Nothing else.

LAURA. Take all my things?

JOHN. All your duds.

LAURA. Why, dear, I can get ready most any time.

JOHN [*crossing* R. *to* C., *looking off into bedroom*]. That your maid?

LAURA. Yes, — Annie.

JOHN. Well, you and she can pack everything you want to take; the rest can follow later. [*Puts coat on.*] I planned it all out.

There's a couple of the boys working down town, — newspaper men on Park Row. Telephoned them when I got in and they're waiting for me. I'll just get down there as soon as I can. I won't be gone long.

LAURA. How long?

JOHN. I don't know just how long, but we'll make that train. I'll get the license. We'll be married and we'll be off on our honeymoon this afternoon. Can you do it?

[LAURA *goes up to him, puts her hands in his, and they confront each other.*]

LAURA. Yes, dear, I could do anything for you.

[*He takes her in his arms and kisses her again. Looks at her tenderly.*]

JOHN. That's good. Hurry now. I won't be long. Good-bye.

LAURA. Hurry back, John.

JOHN. Yes. I won't be long. [*Exit* L.]

LAURA [*stands for a moment looking after him, then she suddenly recovers herself and walks rapidly over to the dresser, picks up large jewel-case, takes doll that is hanging on dresser, puts them on her left arm, takes black cat in her right hand and uses it in emphasizing her words in talking to* ANNIE. *Places them all on table* R.]. Annie, Annie, come here!

ANNIE. Yassum.

[*She appears at the door.*]

LAURA. Annie, I'm going away, and I've got to hurry.

ANNIE. Goin' away?

LAURA. Yes. I want you to bring both my trunks out here, — I'll help you, — and start to pack. We can't take everything [ANNIE *throws fur rug from across doorway into bedroom*], but bring all the clothes out and we'll hurry as fast as we can. Come on.

[*Exit* LAURA *with* ANNIE. *In a very short interval she reappears, and both are carrying a large trunk between them. They put it down up stage* L., *pushing sofa back.*]

ANNIE. Look out for your toes, Miss Laura.

LAURA. I can take two.

ANNIE. Golly, such excitement! [*Crosses to table* R., *pushes it over further, also arm-chair.*] Wheah yuh goin', Miss Laura?

LAURA. Never mind where I'm going. I have n't any time to waste now talking. I'll tell you later. This is one time, Annie, that you've got to move. Hurry up.

[LAURA *pushes her in front of her. Exeunt the same way and reappear with a smaller trunk.*]

ANNIE. Look out fo' your dress, Miss Laura.

[*These trunks are of the same type as those in Act II. When the trunks are put down* LAURA *opens one and commences to throw things out.* ANNIE *stands watching her.* LAURA *kneels in front of trunk* L., *working and humming "Bon-Bon Buddie."*]

ANNIE. Ah nevah see you so happy, Miss Laura.

LAURA. I never was so happy. For Heaven's sake, go get something. Don't stand there looking at me. I want you to hurry.

ANNIE. I'll bring out all de fluffy ones first.

LAURA. Yes, everything.

[ANNIE *enters with armful of dresses and hatbox of tissue paper, dumps tissue paper on floor* C., *puts dresses in trunk* C.]

ANNIE [*goes out again. Outside*]. You goin' to take dat opera-cloak? [*Enters with more dresses, puts them on sofa, takes opera-cloak, spreads it on top of dresses on trunk* C.] My, but dat's a beauty. I jest love dat crushed rosey one. [*Exit up* R.]

LAURA. Annie, you put the best dresses on the foot of the bed and I'll get them myself. You heard what I said?

ANNIE [*off stage*]. Yassum.

[ANNIE *hangs dresses across bed in alcove.* LAURA *continues busily arranging the contents of the trunk, placing some garments here and some there, as if she were sorting them out.* WILL *quietly enters and stands at the door looking at her. He holds this position as long as possible,*

and when he speaks it is in a very quiet tone.]

WILL. Going away?

LAURA [*starts, rises, and confronts him*]. Yes.

WILL. In somewhat of a hurry, I should say.

LAURA. Yes.

WILL. What's the plan?

LAURA. I'm just going, that's all.

WILL. Madison been here?

LAURA. He's just left.

WILL. Of course you are going with him?

LAURA. Yes.

WILL. West?

LAURA. To Nevada.

WILL. Going — er — to get married?

LAURA. Yes, this afternoon.

WILL. So he did n't care, then?

LAURA. What do you mean when you say "he did n't care"?

WILL. Of course you told him about the letter, and how it was burned up, and all that sort of thing, did n't you?

LAURA. Why, yes.

WILL. And he said it did n't make any difference?

LAURA. He — he did n't say anything. We're just going to be married, that's all.

WILL. Did you mention my name and say that we'd been rather companionable for the last two months?

LAURA. I told him you'd been a very good friend to me.

[*During this scene* LAURA *answers* WILL *with difficulty, and to a man of the world it is quite apparent that she is not telling the truth.* WILL *looks over toward her in an almost threatening way.*]

WILL. How soon do you expect him back? [*Crossing to* R. C.]

LAURA. Quite soon. I don't know just exactly how long he'll be.

WILL. And you mean to tell me that you kept your promise and told him the truth?

[*Crossing to trunk* L.]

LAURA. I — I — [*Then with defiance.*] What business have you got to ask me that? What business have you got to interfere anyway?

[*Crossing up to bed in alcove, gets dresses off foot, crosses* L., *puts them on sofa.*]

WILL [*quietly*]. Then you've lied again. You lied to him, and you just tried to lie to me now. I must say, Laura, that you're not particularly clever at it, although I don't doubt but that you've had considerable practice.

[*Gives her a searching look and slowly walks over* R. C. *to the chair at the table and sits down, still holding his hat in his hand and without removing his overcoat.* LAURA *sees* BROCKTON *sitting, stops and turns on him, laying dresses down.*]

LAURA. What are you going to do?

WILL. Sit down here and rest a few moments; maybe longer.

LAURA. You can't do that.

WILL. I don't see why not. This is my own place.

LAURA. But don't you see that he'll come back here soon and find you here?

WILL. That's just exactly what I want him to do.

LAURA [*with suppressed emotion almost on the verge of hysteria*]. I want to tell you this. If you do this thing you'll ruin my life. You've done enough to it already. Now I want you to go. You've got to go. I don't think you've got any right to come here now, in this way, and take this happiness from me. I've given you everything I've got, and now I want to live right and decent, and he wants me to, and we love each other. Now, Will Brockton, it's come to this. You've got to leave this place, do you hear? You've got to leave this place. Please get out.

[*Crossing to trunk* L.]

WILL [*rises and comes to her*]. Do you think I'm going to let a woman make a liar out of me? I'm going to stay right here. I like that boy, and I'm not going to let you put him to the bad.

LAURA. I want you to go.

[*Slams trunk lid down, crosses* R. *to dresser, opens drawer to get stuff out.*]

WILL. And I tell you I won't go. I'm going to show you up. I'm going to tell

him the truth. It is n't you I care for — he's got to know.

LAURA [*slams drawer shut, crosses* L. *to* R. C., *loses her temper, and is almost tiger-like in her anger*]. You don't care for me?

WILL. No.

LAURA. It is n't me you're thinking of?

WILL. No.

LAURA. Who's the liar now?

WILL. Liar?

LAURA. Yes, liar. You are. You don't care for this man, and you know it.

WILL. You're foolish.

LAURA. Yes, I am foolish and I've been foolish all my life, but I'm getting a little sense now. [*Kneels in armchair* R. C. *facing* WILL, *her voice is shaky with anger and tears.*] All my life, since the day you first took me away, you've planned and planned and planned to keep me, and to trick me and bring me down with you. When you came to me I was happy. I did n't have much, just a little salary and some hard work.

WILL. But like all the rest you found that would n't keep you, did n't you?

LAURA. You say I'm bad, but who's made me so? Who took me out night after night? Who showed me what these luxuries were? Who put me in the habit of buying something I could n't afford? You did.

WILL. Well, you liked it, did n't you?

LAURA. Who got me in debt, and then, when I would n't do what you wanted me to, who had me discharged from the company, so I had no means of living? Who followed me from one place to another? Who, always entreating, tried to trap me into this life, and I did n't know any better?

WILL. You did n't know any better?

LAURA. I knew it was wrong — yes; but you told me everybody in this business did that sort of thing, and I was just as good as anyone else. Finally you got me and you kept me. Then when I went away to Denver, and for the first time found a gleam of happiness, for the first time in my life —

WILL. You're crazy.

LAURA. Yes, I am crazy. [*Rises angrily, crossing* R., *sweeps table-cover off table, crosses to dresser, knocks bottles, etc., off upper end, turns, faces him, almost screaming.*] You've made me crazy. You followed me to Denver, and then when I got back you bribed me again. You pulled me down, and you did the same old thing until this happened. Now I want you to get out, you understand? I want you to get out.

WILL. Laura, you can't do this.

[*Starts to sit on trunk* L.]

LAURA [*screaming, crossing* L. *to* WILL, *she attempts to push him*]. No, you won't; you won't stay here. You're not going to do this thing again. I tell you I'm going to be happy. I tell you I'm going to be married. [*He does n't resist her very strongly. Her anger and her rage are entirely new to him. He is surprised and cannot understand.*] You won't see him; I tell you, you won't tell him. You've got no business to. I hate you. I've hated you for months. I hate the sight of your face. I've wanted to go, and now I'm going. You've got to go, do you hear? You've got to get out — get out. [*Pushes him again.*]

WILL [*throwing her off,* LAURA *staggers to armchair, rises, crosses* L.]. What the hell is the use of fussing with a woman?

[*Exit* L.]

LAURA [*hysterically*]. I want to be happy, I'm going to be married, I'm going to be happy.

[*Sinks down in exhausted state in front of trunk,* L.]

CURTAIN, SLOW

ACT IV

SCENE. *The same scene as Act III. It is about two o'clock in the afternoon.*

AT RISE. *When the curtain rises, there are two big trunks and one small one up stage. These are marked in the usual theatrical fashion. There are grips packed, umbrellas, and the usual paraphernalia that accompanies a woman when she is making a permanent departure from her place of living. All the bric-à-brac, etc., has been removed from dresser. On down-stage end of dresser is a small alligator bag containing night-dress, toilet articles, and bunch of keys. The dresser drawers are some of them half open,*

and old pieces of tissue paper and ribbons are hanging out. The writing-desk has had all materials removed and is open, showing scraps of torn-up letters, and in one pigeonhole is a New York Central time-table; between desk and bay-window is a lady's hat-trunk containing huge picture hat. It is closed. Behind table R. *is a suitcase with which* ANNIE *is working when curtain rises. Under desk are two old millinery boxes around which are scattered old tissue paper, a pair of old slippers, a woman's shabby hat, old ribbon, etc. In front of window* L. *at end of pianola is thrown a lot of old empty boxes such as are used for stocking and shirtwaist boxes. The picture frame and basket of flowers have been removed from pianola. The stool is on top of pianola upside down. There is an empty White Rock bottle, with glass turned over it, standing between the legs of the stool. The big trunk is* L. *in front of sofa, and packed, and it has a swing tray under which is packed a fancy evening gown; the lid is down. On top of lid are an umbrella, lady's travelling-coat, hat, and gloves. On sofa* L. *end are a large Gladstone bag packed and fastened, a smaller trunk* C. *(thirty-four inch), tray with lid. In tray are articles of wearing apparel. In end of tray is revolver wrapped in tissue paper. Trunk is closed, and supposed to be locked. Tossed across* L. *arm of armchair are couple of violet cords. Down stage centre is large piece of wide tan ribbon. The room has general appearance of having been stripped of all personal belongings. There are old magazines and tissue paper all over the place. Bearskin rug is thrown up against table in low window, the furniture is all on stage as used in Act III. At rise* LAURA *is sitting on trunk* L. *with clock in hand.* ANNIE *is on floor behind table* R. *fastening suitcase.* LAURA *is pale and perturbed.*

ANNIE. Ain't yuh goin' to let me come to yuh at all, Miss Laura?

LAURA. I don't know yet, Annie. I don't even know what the place is like that we're going to. Mr. Madison has n't said much. There has n't been time.

ANNIE. Why, Ah've done ma best for yuh, Miss Laura, yes, Ah have. Ah jest been with yuh ev'ry moment of ma time, an' [*places suitcase on table* R., *crosses to* C.] Ah worked for yuh an' Ah loved yuh, an' Ah doan' wan' to be left 'ere all alone in dis town 'ere New York. [LAURA *turns to door* L. ANNIE *stoops, grabs up ribbon* C., *hides behind her back.*] Ah ain't the kind of cullud lady knows many people. Can't yuh take me along wid yuh, Miss Laura? — yuh all been so good to me.

LAURA. Why, I told you to [*crosses to door* L., *looks out, returns disappointedly*] stay here and get your things together [ANNIE *hides ribbon in front of her waist*], and then Mr. Brockton will probably want you to do something. Later I think he'll have you pack up just as soon as he finds I'm gone. I've got the address that you gave me. I'll let you know if you can come on.

ANNIE [*suddenly*]. Ain't yuh goin' to give me anything at all jes' to remembuh yuh by? Ah've been so honest —

LAURA. Honest?

ANNIE. Honest, Ah have.

LAURA. You've been about as honest as most colored [*crosses* R. *to table, gets suitcase, crosses* L. *to sofa, puts suitcase on sofa*] girls are who work for women in the position that I am in. You have n't stolen enough to make me discharge you, but I've seen what you've taken.

[*Sits on* R. *end of sofa facing* L.]

ANNIE. Now, Miss Laura.

LAURA. Don't try to fool me. What you've got you're welcome to, but for Heaven's sake don't prate around here about loyalty and honesty. I'm sick of it.

ANNIE. Ain't yuh goin' to give me no recommendation?

LAURA [*impatiently looking around the room*]. What good would my recommendation do? You can always go and get another position with people who've lived the way I've lived, and my recommendation to the other kind would n't amount to much.

ANNIE [*sits on trunk* C.]. Ah can just see whah Ah'm goin', — back to dat boa'din'-house in 38th Street fo' me. [*Crying.*]

LAURA. Now shut your noise. I don't want to hear any more. I've given you

twenty-five dollars for a present. I think that's enough.

[ANNIE *assumes a most aggrieved appearance.*]

ANNIE. Ah know, but twenty-five dollars ain't a home, and I'm [*rises, crosses up to rubbish heap up* R., *picks up old slippers and hat, puts hat on head as she goes out, looks into pier-glass*] losin' my home. Dat's jest my luck — every time I save enough money to buy my weddin' clothes to get married I lose my job. [*Exit up* R.]

LAURA. I wonder where John is. We'll never be able to make that train. [LAURA *crosses to window* L., *then to desk, takes out time-table, crosses to armchair and spreads time-table on back, studies it, crosses impatiently to trunk* C., *and sits nervously kicking feet. After a few seconds' pause, bell rings. She jumps up excitedly.*] That must be he, Annie — go quick.

[ANNIE *crosses and opens the door in the usual manner.*]

JIM'S VOICE [*outside*]. Is Miss Murdock in?

ANNIE. Yassuh, she's in.

[LAURA *is up* C. *stage and turns to receive visitor.* JIM *enters. He is nicely dressed in black and has an appearance of prosperity about him, but in other respects he retains the old drollness of enunciation and manner. He crosses to* LAURA *in a cordial way and holds out his hand.* ANNIE *crosses, after closing the door, and exit through the portières into the sleeping-apartment.*]

JIM. How-dy-do, Miss Laura?

LAURA. Jim Weston, I'm mighty glad to see you.

JIM. Looks like as if you were going to move?

LAURA. Yes, I am going to move, and a long ways, too. How well you're looking, — as fit as a fiddle.

JIM. Yes; I am feelin' fine. Where yer goin'? Troupin'?

LAURA. No, indeed.

JIM [*surveying the baggage*]. Thought not. What's comin' off now?

[*Takes off coat, puts coat and hat on trunk* L.]

LAURA [*very simply*]. I'm going to be married this afternoon.

JIM. Married?

LAURA. And then I'm going West.

JIM [*leaving the trunk and walking toward her and holding out his hands*]. Now I'm just glad to hear that. Ye know when I heard how — how things was breakin' for ye — well, I ain't knockin' or anythin' like that, but me and the missis have talked ye over a lot. I never did think this feller was goin' to do the right thing by yer. Brockton never looked to me like a fellow would marry anybody, but now that he's goin' through just to make you a nice respectable wife, I guess everything must have happened for the best. [LAURA *averts her eyes. Both sit on trunk* C., JIM L. *of* LAURA.] Y' see I wanted to thank you for what you did a couple of weeks ago. Burgess wrote me a letter and told me I could go ahead of one of his big shows if I wanted to come back, and offering me considerable money. He mentioned your name, Miss Laura, and I talked it over with the missis, and — well, I can tell ye now when I could n't if ye were n't to be hooked up — we decided that I would n't take that job, comin' as it did from you [*slowly*] and the way I knew it was framed up.

LAURA. Why not?

JIM [*embarrassed*]. Well, ye see, there are three kids and they're all growing up, all of them in school, and the missis, she's just about forgot show business and she's playing a star part in the kitchen, juggling dishes and doing flip-flaps with pancakes; and we figgered that as we'd always gone along kinder clean-like, it would n't be good for the kids to take a job comin' from Brockton because you — you — well — you —

LAURA. I know. [*Rises, sits on* L. *arm of chair* R. C.] You thought it was n't decent. Is that it?

JIM. Oh, not exactly, only — well, you see I'm gettin' along pretty [*rises, crosses to* LAURA] good now. I got a little one-night stand theatre out in Ohio — manager of it, too. The town is called Gallipolis [*with a smile*].

LAURA. Gallipolis?

JIM. Oh, that ain't a disease. It is the name of a town. Maybe you don't know much about Gallipolis, or where it is.

LAURA. No.

JIM. Well, it looks just like it sounds. We got a little house, and the old lady is happy, and I feel so good that I can even stand her cookin'. Of course we ain't makin' much money, but I guess I'm gettin' a little old-fashioned around theatres anyway. The fellows from newspapers and colleges have got it on me. Last time I asked a man for a job he asked me what I knew about the Greek drama, and when I told him I did n't know the Greeks had a theatre in New York he slipped me a laugh and told me to come in again on some rainy Tuesday. Then Gallipolis showed on the map, and I beat it for the West. [JIM *notices by this time the pain he has caused* LAURA, *and is embarrassed.*] Sorry if I hurt ye — did n't mean to; and now that yer goin' to be Mrs. Brockton, well, I take back all I said, and while I don't think I want to change my position, I would n't turn it down for — for that other reason, that's all.

LAURA [*with a tone of defiance in her voice*]. But, Mr. Weston, I'm not going to be Mrs. Brockton.

JIM. No? [*Crosses* L. *a little.*]

LAURA. No.

JIM. Oh — oh —

LAURA. I'm going to marry another man, and a good man.

JIM. The hell you are!

[LAURA *rises, puts hand on* JIM'S *shoulder.*]

LAURA. And it's going to be altogether different. I know what you meant when you said about the missis and the kids, and that's what I want — just a little home, just a little peace, just a little comfort, and — and the man has come who's going to give it to me. You don't want me to say any more, do you?

[*Crosses to* L. *door, opens it, and looks out, closes it, crosses* R. *to* JIM.]

JIM [*emphatically, and with a tone of hearty approval*]. No, I don't, and now I'm just going to put my mit out and shake yours and be real glad. I want to tell ye it's the only way to go along. I ain't never been a rival to Rockefeller, nor I ain't never made Morgan jealous, but since the day my old woman took her make-up off for the last time and walked out of that stage door to give me a little help and bring my kids into the world, I knew that was the way to go along; and if you're goin' to take that road, by Jiminy, I'm glad of it, for you sure do deserve it. I wish yer luck.

LAURA. Thank you.

JIM. I'm mighty glad you sidestepped Brockton. You're young [LAURA *sits on trunk* L.], and you're pretty, and you're sweet, and if you've got the right kind of a feller there ain't no reason on earth why you should n't jest forgit the whole business and see nothin' but laughs and a good time comin' to you, and the sun sort o' shinin' every twenty-four hours in the day. You know the missis feels just as if she knew you, after I told her about them hard times we had at Farley's boarding-house, so I feel that it's paid me to come to New York [*picks up pin, puts it in lapel of coat*] even if I did n't book anything but "East Lynne" and "Uncle Tom's Cabin." [*Goes over to her.*] Now I'm goin'. Don't forget Gallipolis 's [LAURA *helps him on with his coat*] the name, and sometimes the mail does get there. I'd be awful glad if you wrote the missis a little note tellin' us how you're gettin' along, and if you ever have to ride on the Kanawha and Michigan just look out of the window when the train passes our town, because that is about the best you'll get.

LAURA. Why?

JIM. They only stop there on signal. And make up your mind that the Weston family is with you forty ways from the Jack day and night. Good-bye, and God bless you.

LAURA. Good-bye, Jim. I'm so glad to know you're happy, for it is good to be happy. [*Kisses him.*]

JIM. You bet. [*Moves toward the door. She follows him after they have shaken hands.*] Never mind, I can get out all right. [*Opens the door, and at the door:*] Good-bye again.

LAURA [*very softly*]. Good-bye. [*Exit*

JIM *and closes the door. She stands motionless until she hears the outer door slam.*] I wonder why he does n't come. [*She goes up and looks out of the window and turns down stage, crosses* R., *counting trunks; as she counts suitcase on table, bell rings; she crosses hurriedly to trunk* C.] Hurry, Annie, and see who that is.

[ANNIE *enters, crosses, opens door, exit, opens the outer door.*]

ANNIE'S VOICE. She's waitin' for yer, Mr. Madison.

[LAURA *hurries down to the* C. *of stage.* JOHN *enters, hat in hand and his overcoat on arm, followed by* ANNIE. *He stops just as he enters and looks at* LAURA *long and searchingly.* LAURA *instinctively feels that something has happened. She shudders and remains firm.* ANNIE *crosses and exit. Closes doors* R.]

LAURA [*with a little effort.* JOHN *places hat and coat on trunk* L.]. Are n't you a little late, dear?

JOHN. I — I was detained downtown a few minutes. I think that we can carry out our plan all right.

LAURA [*after a pause*]. Has anything happened?

JOHN. I've made all the arrangements. The men will be here in a few minutes for your trunks. [*Crosses to coat, feels in pocket.*] I've got the railroad tickets and everything else, but —

LAURA. But what, John?

[*He goes over to her. She intuitively understands that she is about to go through an ordeal. She seems to feel that* JOHN *has become acquainted with something which might interfere with their plan. He looks at her long and searchingly. Evidently he too is much wrought up, but when he speaks to her it is with a calm dignity and force which show the character of the man.*]

JOHN. Laura.

LAURA. Yes?

JOHN. You know when I went downtown I said I was going to call on two or three of my friends in Park Row.

LAURA. I know.

JOHN. I told them who I was going to marry.

LAURA. Well?

JOHN. They said something about you and Brockton, and I found that they'd said too much, but not quite enough.

LAURA. What did they say?

JOHN. Just that — too much and not quite enough. There's a minister waiting for us over on Madison Avenue. You see, then you'll be my wife. That's pretty serious business, and all I want now from you is the truth.

LAURA. Well?

JOHN. Just tell me that what they said was just an echo of the past — that it came from what had been going on before that wonderful day out in Colorado. Tell me that you've been on the level. I don't want their word, Laura — I just want yours.

[LAURA *summons all her courage, looks up into his loving eyes, shrinks a moment before his anxious face, and speaks as simply as she can.*]

LAURA. Yes, John, I have been on the level.

JOHN [*very tenderly*]. I knew that, dear, I knew it. [*He takes her in his arms and kisses her. She clings to him in pitiful helplessness. His manner is changed to one of almost boyish happiness.*] Well, now everything's all ready let's get on the job. We have n't a great deal of time. Get your duds on.

LAURA. When do we go?

JOHN. Right away. The great idea is to get away.

LAURA. All right.

[*Gets hat off trunk, crosses to bureau, puts it on.*]

JOHN. Laura, you've got trunks enough, have n't you? One might think we're moving a whole colony. [*Turns to her with a smile.*] And, by the way, to me you are a whole colony — anyway you're the only one I ever wanted to settle with.

LAURA. That's good. [*Takes bag off*

bureau, crosses to trunk, gets purse, coat, umbrella, as if ready to leave. She hurriedly gathers her things together, adjusting her hat and the like, and almost to herself in a low tone:] I'm so excited. [*Continues preparations.*] Come on.

[*In the meantime* JOHN *crosses by to get his hat and coat, and while the preparations are about to be completed and* LAURA *has said "Come on," she is transfixed by the noise of the slamming of the outer door. She stops as if she had been tremendously shocked, and a moment later the rattling of a latch-key in the inner door also stops* JOHN *from going any further. His coat is half on.* LAURA *looks toward the door, paralyzed with fright, and* JOHN *looks at her with an expression of great apprehension. Slowly the door opens, and* BROCKTON *enters with coat and hat on. As he turns to close the door after him,* LAURA, *pitifully and terribly afraid, retreats two or three steps, and lays coat, bag, purse and umbrella down in armchair, standing dazed.* BROCKTON *enters leisurely, paying no attention to anyone, while* JOHN *becomes as rigid as a statue, and follows with his eyes every move* BROCKTON *makes. The latter walks leisurely across the stage, and afterwards into the rooms through the portières. There is a wait of a second. No one moves.* BROCKTON *finally reënters with coat and hat off, and throws back the portières in such a manner as to reveal the bed and his intimate familiarity with the outer room. He goes down stage in the same leisurely manner and sits in a chair* R., *opposite* JOHN, *crossing his legs.*]

WILL. Hello, Madison, when did you get in?

[*Slowly* JOHN *seems to recover himself. His right hand starts up toward the lapel of his coat and slowly he pulls his Colt revolver from the holster under his armpit. There is a deadly determination and deliberation in every movement that he makes.* WILL *jumps to his feet and looks at him. The revolver is uplifted in the air, as a Western man handles a gun, so that when it is snapped down with a jerk the deadly shot can be fired.* LAURA *is terror-stricken, but before the shot is fired she takes a step forward and extends one hand in a gesture of entreaty.*]

LAURA [*in a husky voice that is almost a whisper*]. Don't shoot.

[*The gun remains uplifted for a moment.* JOHN *is evidently wavering in his determination to kill. Slowly his whole frame relaxes. He lowers the pistol in his hand in a manner which clearly indicates that he is not going to shoot. He quietly puts it back in the holster, and* WILL *is obviously relieved, although he stood his ground like a man.*]

JOHN [*slowly*]. Thank you. You said that just in time. [*A pause.*]

WILL [*recovering and in a light tone*]. Well, you see, Madison, that what I said when I was —

JOHN [*threateningly*]. Look out, Brockton, I don't want to talk to you.

[*The men confront.*]

WILL. All right.

JOHN [*to* LAURA]. Now get that man out of here.

LAURA. John, I —

JOHN. Get him out. Get him out before I lose my temper or they'll take him out without his help.

LAURA [*to* WILL]. Go — go. Please go.

WILL [*deliberately*]. If that's the way you want it I'm willing.

[*Exit* WILL *into the sleeping-apartment.* LAURA *and* JOHN *stand facing each other. He enters again with hat and coat on and passes over toward the door.*

LAURA *and* JOHN *do not move. When he gets just a little to the* L. *of the* C. *of the stage* LAURA *steps forward and stops him with her speech.*]

LAURA. Now before you go, and to you both, I want to tell you how I've learned to despise him. John, I know you don't believe me, but it's true — it's true. I don't love anyone in the world but just you. I know you don't think that it can be explained — maybe there is n't any explanation. I could n't help it. I was so poor, and I had to live, and he would n't let me work, and he's only let me live one way, and I was hungry. Do you know what that means? I was hungry and did n't have clothes to keep me warm, and I tried, oh, John, I tried so hard to do the other thing, — the right thing, — but I could n't.

JOHN. I — I know I could n't help much, and perhaps I could have forgiven you if you had n't lied to me. That's what hurt. [*Turning to* WILL *and approaching until he can look him in the eyes.*] I expected you to lie, you're that kind of a man. You left me with a shake of the hand and you gave me your word, and you did n't keep it. Why should you keep it? Why should anything make any difference with you? Why, you pup, you've no right to live in the same world with decent folks. Now you make yourself scarce, or take it from me, I'll just kill you, that's all.

WILL. I'll leave, Madison, but I'm not going to let you think that I did n't do the right thing with you. She came to me voluntarily. She said she wanted to come back. I told you that when I was in Colorado, and you did n't believe me, and I told you that when she did this sort of thing I'd let you know. I dictated a letter to her to send to you, and I left it sealed and stamped in her hands to mail. She did n't do it. If there's been a lie she told it. I did n't.

[JOHN *turns to her. She hangs her head and averts her eyes in a mute acknowledgment of guilt. The revelation hits* JOHN *so hard that he sinks on the trunk* C., *his head fallen to his breast. He is utterly limp and whipped. There is a moment's silence.*]

WILL [*crosses to* JOHN]. You see! Why, my boy, whatever you think of me or the life I lead, I would n't have had this come to you for anything in the world. [JOHN *makes an impatient gesture.*] No, I would n't. My women don't mean a whole lot to me because I don't take them seriously. I wish I had the faith and the youth to feel the way you do. You're all in and broken up, but I wish I could be broken up just once. I did what I thought was best for you because I did n't think she could ever go through the way you wanted her to. I'm sorry it's all turned out bad. [*Pause.*] Good-bye.

[*He looks at* JOHN *for a moment as if he was going to speak.* JOHN *remains motionless. The blow has hit him harder than he thought.* WILL *exit. The first door closes. In a moment the second door is slammed.* JOHN *and* LAURA *look at each other for a moment. He gives her no chance to speak. The hurt in his heart and his accusation are shown by his broken manner. A great grief has come into his life and he does n't quite understand it. He seems to be feeling around for something to say, some way to get out. His head turns toward the door. With a pitiful gesture of the hand he looks at her in all his sorrow.*]

JOHN. Well? [*Rises.*]

LAURA. John, I —

[*Takes off hat, places it on table* R.]

JOHN. I'd be careful what I said. Don't try to make excuses. I understand.

LAURA. It's not excuses. I want to tell you what's in my heart, but I can't; it won't speak, and you don't believe my voice.

JOHN. You'd better leave it unsaid.

LAURA. But I must tell. I can't let you go like this. [*She goes over to him and makes a weak attempt to put her arms around him. He takes her arms and puts them back to her side.*] I love you. I — how can I tell you

—but I do, I do, and you won't believe me.

[*He remains silent for a moment and then takes her by the hand, leads her over to the chair and places her in it.*]

JOHN. I think you do as far as you are able; but, Laura, I guess you don't know what a decent sentiment is. [*He gathers himself together. His tone is very gentle and very firm, but it carries a tremendous conviction, even with his grief ringing through his speech.*] Laura, you're not immoral, you're just unmoral, kind o' all out of shape, and I'm afraid there is n't a particle of hope for you. When we met neither of us had any reason to be proud, but I thought that you thought that it was the chance of salvation which sometimes comes to a man and a woman fixed as we were then. What had been had been. It was all in the great to-be for us, and now, how you've kept your word! What little that promise meant, when I thought you handed me a new lease of life!

LAURA [*in a voice that is changed and metallic. She is literally being nailed to the cross*]. You're killing me — killing me.

JOHN. Don't make such a mistake. In a month you'll recover. There will be days when you will think of me, just for a moment, and then it will be all over. With you it is the easy way, and it always will be. You'll go on and on until you're finally left a wreck, just the type of the common woman. And you'll sink until you're down to the very bed-rock of depravity. I pity you.

LAURA [*still in the same metallic tone of voice*]. You'll never leave me to do that. I'll kill myself.

JOHN. Perhaps that's the only thing left for you to do, but you'll not do it. It's easier to live.

[*Crosses and gets hat and coat, turns, looks at her,* LAURA *rising at the same time.*]

LAURA. John, I said I'd kill myself, and I mean it. If it's the only thing to do, I'll do it, and I'll do it before your very eyes. [*She crosses quickly, gets keys out of satchel, opens trunk, takes gun out of trunk* C., *stands* C., *facing* JOHN, *waiting a moment.*] You understand that when your hand touches that door I'm going to shoot myself. I will, so help me God!

JOHN [*stops and looks at her*]. Kill yourself? [*Pause.*] Before me? [*Pause.*] All right. [*Raising his voice.*] Annie, Annie!

ANNIE [*enters up* R.]. Yes, sir.

JOHN [LAURA *looks at* JOHN *in bewilderment*]. You see your mistress there has a pistol in her hand?

ANNIE [*crosses down* R., *frightened*]. Yassuh —

JOHN. She wants to kill herself. I just called you to witness that the act is entirely voluntary on her part. Now, Laura, go ahead.

LAURA [*nearly collapsing, drops the pistol to the floor*]. John, I — can't —

JOHN. Annie, she's evidently changed her mind. You may go.

ANNIE. But, Miss Laura, Ah —

JOHN [*peremptorily*]. You may go. [*Bewildered and not understanding,* ANNIE *exit through the portières. In that same gentle tone, but carrying with it an almost frigid conviction.*] You did n't have the nerve. I knew you would n't. For a moment you thought the only decent thing for you to do was to die, and yet you could n't go through. I am sorry for you, — more sorry than I can tell. [*He takes a step towards the door.*]

LAURA. You're going — you're going?

JOHN. Yes.

LAURA. And — and — you never thought that perhaps I'm frail, and weak, and a woman, and that now, maybe, I need your strength, and you might give it to me, and it might be better. I want to lean on you, — lean on you, John. I know I need someone. Are n't you going to let me? Won't you give me another chance?

JOHN. I gave you your chance, Laura.

LAURA [*throws arms around his neck*]. Give me another.

JOHN. But you leaned the wrong way. Good-bye. [*He pulls away and goes out* L., *slamming both doors.*]

LAURA [*screaming*]. John — John — I — [*She sits on trunk* L. *weeping in loud and tearful manner, rises in a dazed fashion, starts to cross* R., *sees gun, utters loud cry of mingled despair and anger, grabs up gun,*

crossing to bureau, opens up-stage drawer, throws gun in, slams drawer shut, calling:] Annie! Annie!

ANNIE [*appears through the portières*]. Ain't yuh goin' away, Miss Laura?

LAURA [*suddenly arousing herself, and with a defiant voice*]. No, I'm not. I'm going to stay right here. [ANNIE *crosses and opens trunk* L., *takes out handsome dress, crosses, hangs it over back of armchair* R. C., *crosses up to hat trunk, takes out hat.* LAURA *takes it from her, crosses to trunk* L., *starts to unpack it.*] Open these trunks, take out those clothes, get me my prettiest dress. Hurry up. [*She goes before the mirror.*] Get my new hat, dress up my body and paint up my face. It's all they've left of me. [*To herself.*] They've taken my soul away with them.

ANNIE [*in a happy voice*]. Yassum, yassum.

LAURA [*who is arranging her hair*]. Doll me up, Annie.

ANNIE. Yuh goin' out, Miss Laura?

LAURA. Yes. I'm going to Rector's to make a hit, and to hell with the rest.

[*At this moment the hurdy-gurdy in the street, presumably immediately under her window, begins to play the tune of "Bon-Bon Buddie, My Chocolate Drop." There is something in this ragtime melody which is particularly and peculiarly suggestive of the low life, the criminality and prostitution that constitute the night excitement of that section of New York City known as the Tenderloin. The tune, its association, is like spreading before* LAURA'S *eyes a panorama of the inevitable depravity that awaits her. She is torn from every ideal that she so weakly endeavored to grasp, and is thrown into the mire and slime at the very moment when her emancipation seems to be assured. The woman, with her flashy dress in one arm and her equally exaggerated type of picture hat in the other, is nearly prostrated by the tune and the realization of the future as it is terrifically conveyed to her. The negress, in the happiness of serving* LAURA *in her questionable career, picks up the melody and hums it as she unpacks the finery that has been put away in the trunk.*]

LAURA [*with infinite grief, resignation, and hopelessness*]. O God — O my God.

[*She turns and totters toward the bedroom. The hurdy-gurdy continues, with the negress accompanying it.*]

A SLOW CURTAIN

THE PIPER

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

By JOSEPHINE PRESTON PEABODY

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ANNO 1284
AM DAGE JOHANNIS ET PAULI
WAR DER 26 JUNII
DORCH EINEN PIPER MIT ALLERLEY FARVE BEKLEDET
GEWESEN CXXX KINDER VERLEDET
BINNEN HAMELEN GEBOREN
TO CALVARIE BI DEN KOPPEN VERLOREN

[THE HAMELIN INSCRIPTION]

CHARACTERS

THE PIPER
MICHAEL-THE-SWORD-EATER } *Strolling Players*
CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

JACOBUS *the Burgomeister*
KURT *the Syndic*
PETER *the Cobbler*
HANS *the Butcher*
AXEL *the Smith*
MARTIN *the Watch* } *Men of Hamelin*
PETER *the Sacristan*
ANSELM, *a young priest*
OLD CLAUS, *a miser*
TOWN CRIER

JAN
HANSEL
ILSE } *Children*
TRUDE
RUDI

VERONIKA, *the wife of Kurt*
BARBARA, *daughter of Jacobus*
WIFE OF HANS *the Butcher*
WIFE OF AXEL *the Smith*
WIFE OF MARTIN *the Watch*
OLD URSULA

Burghers, nuns, priests, and children

SCENE: HAMELIN ON THE WESER, 1284 A.D.

SCENES

ACT I.		*The market-place in Hamelin*
ACT II.	SCENE I.	*Inside the "Hollow Hill"*
	SCENE II.	*The Cross-ways*
ACT III.		*The Cross-ways*
ACT IV.		*The market-place in Hamelin*

One week is supposed to elapse between Acts I and II

Acts II and III occupy one day

Act IV concerns the following morning

THE PIPER

ACT I

SCENE: *The market-place of Hamelin. Right, the Minster, with an open shrine (right centre) containing a large sculptured figure of the Christ. Right, farther front, the house of* KURT; *and other narrow house-fronts. Left, the Rathaus, and (down) the home of* JACOBUS. *Front, to left and right, are corner-houses with projecting stories and casement windows. At the centre rear, a narrow street leads away between houses whose gables all but meet overhead.*

It is late summer afternoon, with a holiday crowd. In the open casements, front (right and left, opposite each other), sit OLD URSULA *and* OLD CLAUS, *looking on at men and things. — In the centre of the place now stands a rude wooden Ark with a tented top: and out of the openings (right and left) appear the artificial heads of animals, worn by the players inside. One is a Bear (inhabited by* MICHAEL-THE-SWORD-EATER); *one is a large Reynard-the-Fox, later apparent as the* PIPER. *Close by is the mediæval piece of stage-property known as "Hell-Mouth," i.e. a red painted cave with a jaw-like opening, into which a mountebank dressed in scarlet (*CHEAT-THE-DEVIL) *is poking "Lost Souls" with a pitchfork.*

BARBARA *loiters by the tent.* VERONIKA, *the sad young wife of* KURT, *watches from the house steps, left, keeping her little lame boy, Jan, close beside her.*

Shouts of delight greet the end of the show, — a Noah's Ark miracle-play of the rudest; and the Children continue to scream with joy whenever an Animal looks out of the Ark.

Men and women pay scant attention either to JACOBUS, *when he speaks (himself none too sober) — from his doorstep, prompted by the frowning* KURT, — *or yet to* ANSELM, *the priest, who stands forth with lifted hands, at the close of the miracle-play.*

ANSELM. And you, who heed the colors of this show,
Look to your laughter! — It doth body forth
A Judgment that may take you unaware, —
Sun-struck with mirth, like unto chattering leaves
Some wind of wrath shall scourge to nothingness.

HANS, AXEL, AND OTHERS. Hurrah, Hurrah!

JACOBUS. And now, good townsmen all,
Seeing we stand delivered and secure
As once yon chosen creatures of the Ark,
For a similitude, — our famine gone,
Our plague of rats and mice, —

CROWD. Hurrah — hurrah!

JACOBUS. 'T is meet we render thanks more soberly —

HANS *the Butcher.* Soberly, soberly, ay! —

JACOBUS. For our deliverance.
And now, ye wit, it will be full three days
Since we beheld — our late departed pest. —

OLD URSULA [*putting out an ear-trumpet*]. What does he say?

REYNARD [*from the Ark*]. — Oh, how felicitous!

HANS' WIFE. He 's only saying there be no more rats.

JACOBUS [*with oratorical endeavor*]. Three days it is; and not one mouse, — one mouse,
One mouse, I say! — No-o-o! Quiet . . . as a mouse.
[*Resuming.*] And now . . .

CROWD. Long live Jacobus! —

JACOBUS. You have seen
Noah and the Ark, most aptly happening by
With these same play-folk. You have marked the Judgment.

You all have seen the lost souls sent to — Hell —
And, nothing more to do. —
[KURT *prompts him.*] Yes, yes. — And now . . .
[HANS *the Butcher steps out of his group.*]
HANS *the Butcher.* Hath no man seen the Piper? — Please your worships.
OTHERS. Ay, ay, so!
— Ay, where is he?
— Ho, the Piper!
JACOBUS. Piper, my good man?
HANS *the Butcher.* — He that charmed the rats!
OTHERS. Yes, yes, — that charmed the rats!
JACOBUS [*piously*]. Why, no man knows.
Which proves him such a random instrument
As Heaven doth sometimes send us, to our use;
Or, as I do conceive, no man at all, —
A man of air; or, I would say — delusion.
He'll come no more.
REYNARD [*from the Ark*]. Eh? — Oh, indeed, Meaow!
JACOBUS. 'T is clearest providence. The rats are gone.
The man is gone. And there is nought to pay,
Save peaceful worship.
[*Pointing to the Minster.*]
REYNARD [*sarcastically*]. Oh, indeed, — Meaow!
[*Sudden chorus of derisive animal noises from the Ark, delighting* PEOPLE *and* CHILDREN.]
KURT. Silence, — you strollers there! Or I will have you
Gaoled, one and all.
PEOPLE. No, Kurt the Syndic, no!
BARBARA [*to* JACOBUS]. No, no! Ah, father, bid them stay awhile
And play it all again. — Or, if not all,
Do let us see that same good youth again,
Who swallowed swords — between the Ark Preserved
And the Last Judgment!
REYNARD. Michael-the-Sword-Eater, Laurels for thee!
[*The* BEAR *disappears:* MICHAEL *puts out his own head, and gazes fixedly at* BARBARA.]
CHILDREN. Oh, can't we see the animals in the Ark?
Again? Oh, can't we see it all again?
ILSE. Oh, leave out Noah! And let's have only Bears
And Dromedaries, and the other ones! —
[*General confusion.*]
KURT. Silence!
JACOBUS. Good people — you have had your shows;
And it is meet, that having held due feast,
Both with our market and this Miracle,
We bring our holiday to close with prayer
And public thanks unto Saint Willibald, —
Upon whose day the rats departed thence
REYNARD [*loudly*]. Saint Willibald!
BEAR. — Saint Willibald.
OTHER ANIMALS [*looking out*]. Saint Willibald! Saint! Oh!
CROWD. Saint Willibald! — And what had he to do
With ridding us o' rats?
HANS *the Butcher.* 'T was the Piping Man
Who came and stood here in the market-place,
And swore to do it for one thousand guilders!
PETER *the Cobbler.* Ay, and he did it, too! — Saint Willibald!
[*Renewed uproar round the tent.*]
KURT [*to* JACOBUS]. Drive out those mountebanks! 'T is ever so.
Admit them to the town and you must pay
Their single show with riotings a week. —
Look yonder at your daughter.
[BARBARA *lingers by the Ark-Tent, gazing with girlish interest at* MICHAEL, *who gazes at her, his bear-head in his hand for the moment.*]
JACOBUS. Barbara!
[*She turns back, with an angry glance at* KURT.]
AXEL *the Smith* [*doggedly to them*]. By your leave, Masters! I would like to know,
How did Saint Willibald prevail with the rats? —

That would I like to know. I, who ha' made
Of strong wrought traps, two hundred, thirty-nine,
Two hundred, thirty-nine.

REYNARD *[calling]*. And so would I!

HANS *the Butcher*. So please your worships, may it please the Crier,
Now we be here, — to cry the Piping Man —

PETER *the Cobbler*. A stranger-man, gay-clad, — in divers colors!
Because he, with said piping —

HANS *the Butcher*. — Drave away
The horde of rats!

PETER *the Cobbler [sagely]*. To our great benefit;
And we be all just men.

OTHERS. Ay, ay! — Amen!

WOMEN. Amen, Our Lady and the blessed Saints!

JACOBUS. Why, faith, good souls, if ye will have him cried,
So be it. — But the ways of Heaven are strange!
Mark how our angel of deliverance came, —
Or it may be, Saint Willibald himself, —
Most piedly clothed, even as the vilest player! —
And straight ascended from us, to the clouds!
But cry him, if you will. — Peace to your lungs! —
He will not come.

[KURT wrathfully consults with JACOBUS, then signals to Crier.]

CRIER. Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!
Whereas, now three days gone, our Plague of Rats
Was wholly driven hence, our City cleansed,
Our peace restored after sore threat of famine,
By a Strange Man who came not back again,
Now, therefore, if this Man have ears to hear,
Let him stand forth. — Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!

[Trumpet. — PEOPLE gaze up and down the little streets. — REYNARD steps out of the Ark and comes down slowly, with a modest air. — KURT points him out, threateningly, and the CROWD bursts into derisive laughter. — He doffs his animal-head at leisure, showing a sparkling dark-eyed face.]

ALL. The Man! the Man!

KURT AND JACOBUS. The Devil! — 'T is —

ALL. — THE PIPER!

[The PIPER regards them all with debonair satisfaction; then reverses his head-piece and holds it out upside-down, with a confident smile.]

PIPER. Three days of rest, your worships, you have had.
I see no signs of famine hereabout.
The rats are gone, even to the nethermost tail:
And I've fulfilled my bargain. Is it granted?

[Murmurs, then cheers of "Ay, Ay, Piper!" from the crowd.]

Thank'ee. — My thousand guilders, an you please.

JACOBUS. One thou — Come, come! This was no sober bargain. —
No man in reason could —

PIPER. One thousand guilders.

KURT. One thousand rogueries!

JACOBUS *[to PIPER]*. You jest too far.

AXEL. Lucky, if he get aught! — Two hundred traps,
And nine, and thirty! By Saint Willibald,
When was I paid?

AXEL'S WIFE. Say, now!

PIPER. . . . One thousand guilders.

PETER *the Cobbler*. Give him an hundred.

HANS *the Butcher*. Double!

HANS' WIFE. You were fool
To make agreement with him. — Ask old Claus.
He has the guilders; and his house was full
O' rats!

OLD CLAUS *[shaking his stick from the window]*. You jade! And I that hoard, and save,
And lay by all I have from year to year,
To build my monument when I am gone,
A fine new tomb there, in Saint Boniface!
And I to pay for all your city rats!

OLD URSULA *[leaning out, opposite]*. Right, neighbor, right well said! — Piper, hark here.
Piper, how did ye charm the rats away?

PIPER [*coming down*]. The rats were led — by Cu-ri-os-ity.
'T is so with many rats; and all old women; —
Saving your health!
JACOBUS. No thought for public weal,
In this base grasping on —
PIPER. One thousand guilders.
KURT [*contemptuously*]. For piping!
PIPER. Shall I pipe them back again?
WOMEN.
Merciful heaven! { Good Saint Boniface! / Good Saint Willibald! / Peter and Paul defend us!
HANS *the Butcher*. No, no; no fear o' that. The rats be drowned.
We saw them with our eyes.
PIPER. Now who shall say
There is no resurrection for a mouse?
KURT. — Do you but crop this fellow's ears! —
VERONIKA [*from the steps*]. Ah, Kurt!
JACOBUS [*to him, blandly*]. Deal patiently, good neighbor. All is well.
[*To the* PIPER.] Why do you name a price so laughable,
My man? Call you to mind; you have no claim, —
No scrip to show. You cling upon —
PIPER [*sternly*]. Your word.
JACOBUS. I would say — just —
PIPER. Your word.
JACOBUS. Upon —
PIPER. Your word.
Sure, 't was a rotten parchment!
JACOBUS. This is a base,
Conniving miser!
PIPER [*turning proudly*]. Stand forth, Cheat-the-Devil!
[*Up steps the* DEVIL *in red.* PEOPLE *shrink, and then come closer.*]
Be not afeard. He pleased you all, of late.
He hath no sting. — So, boy! Do off thy head. —
[CHEAT-THE-DEVIL *doffs his red headdress and stands forth, a pale and timorous youth, gentle and half-witted.*]
Michael, stand forth!
[MICHAEL *comes down, bear-head in hand.*]
BARBARA [*regarding him sadly*]. That goodly sword-eater!
PIPER [*defiantly*]. So, Michael, so. — These be two friends of mine.
Pay now an even third to each of us.
Or, to content your doubts, to each of these
Do you pay here and now, five hundred guilders.
Who gets it matters little, for us friends.
But you will pay the sum, friend. You will pay! —
HANS, AXEL, AND CROWD. Come, there's an honest fellow. Aye, now, pay!
— There's a good friend. — And would I had the same.
— One thousand guilders?
— No, too much.
— No, no.
KURT. Pay jugglers? — With a rope apiece!
JACOBUS. Why — so —
PIPER. They are my friends; and they shall share with me.
'T is time that Hamelin reckoned us for men;
— Hath ever dealt with us as we were vermin.
Now have I rid you of the other sort —
Right you that score! —
KURT. These outcasts!
PIPER [*hotly*]. Say you so?
Michael, my man! Which of you here will try
With glass or fire, with him?
MICHAEL [*sullenly*]. No, no more glass, to-day!
PIPER. Then fire and sword!
[*They back away.*]
So! — And there's not one man
In Hamelin, here, so honest of his word.
Stroller! A pretty choice you leave us. — Quit
This strolling life, or stroll into a cage!
What do you offer him? A man eats fire —
Swords, glass, young April frogs —
CHILDREN. Do it again!
Do it again!
PIPER. You say to such a man, —
"Come be a monk! A weaver!" Pretty choice.
Here's Cheat-the-Devil, now.
PETER *the Cobbler*. But what's his name?

PIPER. He does n't know. What would you? Nor do I.
But for the something he has seen of life,
Making men merry, he'd know something more!
The gentlest devil ever spiked Lost Souls
Into Hell-mouth, — for nothing-by-the-day!
OLD URSULA [*with her ear-trumpet*]. Piper, why do you call him Cheat-the-Devil?
PIPER. Because his deviltry is all a cheat: —
He is no devil, — but a gentle heart!
— Friend Michael here hath played the Devil, betimes,
Because he can so bravely breathe out fire.
He plied the pitchfork so we yelped for mercy, —
He reckoned not the stoutness of his arm! —
But Cheat-the-Devil here, — he would not hurt
Why — Kurt the Syndic — thrusting him in hell. [*Laughter.*]
CHEAT-THE-DEVIL [*unhappily*]. No, no — I will not hurt him!
PIPER [*soothingly to him*]. Merry, boy!
[*To the townsfolk.*] And, — if ye will have reasons, good, — ye see, —
I want — one thousand guilders.
JACOBUS. In all surety,
Payment you'll have, my man. But —
HANS *the Butcher*. As to's friends, —
An that yon Devil be as feat wi' his hands
As he be slow o' tongue, why, I will take him
For prentice. Wife, — now that would smack o' pride!
PETER *the Cobbler*. I'll take this fellow that can swallow fire.
He's somewhat old for me. But he can learn
My trade. — A pretty fellow!
PIPER. And your trade?
PETER *the Cobbler*. Peter the cobbler. —
MICHAEL. I? What, I? Make shoes?
[*Proudly.*] I swallow fire.
PIPER. Enough.
BARBARA [*aside, bitterly*]. I'll not believe it.
PIPER [*to* HANS]. Your trade?
HANS *the Butcher*. I'm Hans the Butcher.
MICHAEL. Butcher?
CHEAT-THE-DEVIL [*unhappily*]. Butcher!
Oh, no! I could n't hurt them.
[*Loud laughter.*]
BUTCHER'S WIFE. 'T is a fool!
[*The* PIPER *motions to* MICHAEL *and* CHEAT-THE-DEVIL, *who during the following join the other player-folk, strike their tent, pack their bundles, and wheel off the barrows that have served them for an Ark, leaving the space clear before the Shrine. Exeunt Strollers, all but* MICHAEL, *who hangs about, still gazing at* BARBARA.]
JACOBUS. Good people, we have wasted time enow.
You see this fellow, that he has no writ —
PIPER. Why not, then? 'T was a bargain. If your word
Hold only when 't is writ —
KURT. We cannot spend
Clerkship on them that neither write nor read.
What good would parchment do thee?
JACOBUS. My good man —
PIPER. Who says I cannot read? — Who says I cannot?
OLD CLAUS. Piper, don't tell me you can read in books!
PIPER [*at bay*]. Books! Where's a book? Shew me a book, I say!
OLD URSULA. The Holy Book! Bring that — or he'll bewitch you.
PIPER. Oh, never fear. I charm but fools and children;
Now that the rats are gone. — Bring me a Book:
A big one! —
[*Murmurs. The* PIPER *defiant. The crowd moves towards the Minster.*]

[*Enter* ANSELM *the priest, with a little acolyte, the two bearing a large illuminated Gospel-book.* ANSELM, *eyeing the* PIPER *gravely, opens the book, which the boy supports on his head and shoulders.*]

PIPER. Ho, 't is too heavy! Come, you cherub-head,

Here's too much laid upon one guardian angel!

[*Beckons another small boy, and sets the book on their two backs.*]

Well? — well? — What now?

[*He looks in frank bewilderment at the eager crowd.*]

CROWD. Read, read!

KURT. He cannot read.

PIPER [*to* ANSELM]. Turn — turn — there's nothing there.

[ANSELM *turns pages.* PIPER *looks on blankly*].

. . . Ah, turn again!

The big red Letter. —

[*He takes his pipe from his belt.*]

No, the green! The green one. So.

[*Starts to pipe, looking on the book.*]

CROWD. { Sure 't is a mad-man!
But hear him piping!
What is he doing?

PIPER [*puzzled at their mirth*]. What the green one says. —

[*A burst of laughter from the crowd.* JAN, *the little lame boy on the steps, reaches his arms out suddenly and gives a cry of delight.*]

JAN. Oh, I love the Man!

[*He goes, with his crutch, to the* PIPER, *who turns and gathers him close.*]

JACOBUS [*to the People*]. Leave off this argument.

KURT. In, — to the minster.

JACOBUS. Saint Willibald!

PIPER [*in a rage*]. That Saint! —

KURT. Hence, wandering dog!

PIPER. Oho! — Well, every Saint may have his day.

But there are dog-days coming. — Eh, your worship?

[*To* ANSELM, *suddenly*]. You, there! You — Brother — Father — Uncle — — You!

Speak! Will you let them in, to say their prayers

And mock me through their fingers? — Tell these men

To settle it, among their mouldy pockets,

Whether they keep their oath. Then will I go.

KURT [*savagely*]. Away with you! —

ANSELM. The Piper should be heard;

Ye know it well. Render to Cæsar, therefore,

That which is Cæsar's.

PIPER. — Give the Devil his due!

JACOBUS [*warily*]. We must take counsel over such a sum.

[*Beckoning others, he and* KURT *go into the Rathaus, followed by all the men. Exit* ANSELM *with the Holy Book into the Minster. — The children play Mouse, to and fro, round about the* PIPER. — *The women, some of them, spin on the doorsteps, with little hand distaffs, or stand about, gossiping. The* PIPER *wipes his forehead and goes up slowly (centre) to drink from the fountain at the foot of the Shrine. —* MICHAEL, *like one in a dream, comes down towards* BARBARA, *who gazes back at him, fascinated, through her laughter.*]

BARBARA. Is it for pay you loiter, Master Player?

Were you not paid enough?

MICHAEL. No. — One more look.

BARBARA. Here, then. — Still not enough?

MICHAEL. No! One more smile.

BARBARA [*agitated*]. Why would you have me smile?

MICHAEL [*passionately*]. Oh, when you smiled,

It was — it was like sunlight coming through

Some window there,

[*Pointing to the Minster.*] — some vision of Our Lady.

[*She drops her flowers. — He picks them up and gives them back slowly.*]

BARBARA. Who are you? You are some one in disguise.

MICHAEL [*bitterly*]. A man — that passes for a mountebank.

BARBARA [*eagerly*]. I knew!

MICHAEL. What then?

BARBARA. Thou art of noble birth.

'T is some disguise, this playing with the fire!

MICHAEL. Yes. — For to-day, I lord it with the fire.
But it hath burned me, here.
[*Touching his breast. Overcome for the moment,* BARBARA *draws away. — The* PIPER, *coming down, speaks stealthily to* MICHAEL, *who is still gazing.*]
PIPER. For all our sakes!
There is bad weather breeding. — Take to thy heels.
[BARBARA *turns back to see* MICHAEL *withdrawing reluctantly, and throws a rose to him with sudden gayety.*]
BARBARA. Farewell to you, Sword-Swallower! — farewell!
MICHAEL [*looking back*]. Farewell to you, my Lady, in-the-Moon.
[*Exit.* JAN *clings once more to the* PIPER, *while the other children hang about.*]

[*Enter* VERONIKA *from her house. She goes towards her boy.*]

VERONIKA. Darling. —
PIPER [*drawing nearer*]. Is this your Boy?
VERONIKA. Ay, he is mine;
My only one, He loved thy piping so.
PIPER. And I loved his.
HANS' WIFE [*stridently*]. Poor little boy! He's lame!
PIPER. 'T is all of us are lame! But he, he flies.
VERONIKA. Jan, stay here if you will, and hear the pipe,
At Church-time.
PIPER [*to him*]. Wilt thou?
JAN [*softly*]. Mother lets me stay
Here with the Lonely Man.
PIPER. The Lonely Man?
[JAN *points to the Christ in the Shrine.* VERONIKA *crosses herself. The* PIPER *looks long at the little boy.*]
VERONIKA. He always calls Him so.
PIPER. And so would I.
VERONIKA. It grieves him that the Head is always bowed,
And stricken. But he loves more to be here
Than yonder in the church.
PIPER. And so do I.
VERONIKA. What would you, darling, with the Lonely Man?
What do you wait to see?
JAN [*shyly*]. To see Him smile.
[*The women murmur. The* PIPER *comes down further to speak to* VERONIKA.]
PIPER. You are some foreign woman. Are you not?
Never from Hamelin!
VERONIKA. No.
AXEL'S WIFE [*to her child*]. Then run along.
And ask the Piper if he'll play again
The tune that charmed the rats.
ANOTHER. They might come back!
OLD URSULA [*calling from her window*]. Piper! I want the tune that charmed the rats!
If they come back, I'll have my grandson play it.
PIPER. I pipe but for the children.
ILSE [*dropping her doll and picking it up*]. Oh, do pipe
Something for Fridolin!
HANSEL. Oh, pipe at me!
Now I'm a mouse! I'll eat you up! Rr — rr! —
CHILDREN. Oh, pipe! Oh, play! Oh, play and make us dance!
Oh, play, and make us run away from school!
PIPER. Why, what are these?
CHILDREN [*scampering round him*]. We're mice, we're mice, we're mice! . . .
We're mice, we're mice! We'll eat up everything!
MARTIN'S WIFE [*calling*]. 'T is church-time. La, what will the neighbors say?
ILSE [*waving her doll*]. Oh, please do play something for Fridolin!
AXEL'S WIFE. Do hear the child. She's quite the little mother!
PIPER. A little mother? Ugh! How horrible.
That fairy thing, that princess, — no, that Child!
A little mother?
[*To her.*] Drop the ugly thing!
MARTIN'S WIFE. Now, on my word! and what's amiss with mothers?

Are mothers horrible?

[*The* PIPER *is struck with painful memories.*]

PIPER. No, no. But — care
And want and pain and age . . .
[*Turns back to them with a bitter change of voice*]. And penny-wealth, —
And penny-counting. — Penny prides and fears —
Of what the neighbors say the neighbors say! —

MARTIN'S WIFE. And were you born without a mother, then?

ALL. Yes, you there! Ah, I told you! He's no man.
He's of the devil.

MARTIN'S WIFE. Who was your mother, then?

PIPER [*fiercely*]. Mine! — Nay, I do not know. For when I saw her,
She was a thing so trodden, lost and sad,
I cannot think that she was ever young,
Save in the cherishing voice. — She was a stroller.

[*The women draw aside furtively, two by two, and listen unwillingly from the doorsteps with looks of dread and aversion, as the* PIPER *continues with growing passion.*]

She was a stroller. — And she starved and sang;
And like the wind, she wandered, and was cold,
Outside your lighted windows, and fled by,
Storm-hunted, trying to outstrip the snow,
South, south, and homeless as a broken bird, —
Limping and hiding! — And she fled, and laughed,
And kept me warm; and died! To you, a Nothing;
Nothing, forever, oh, you well-housed mothers!
As always, always for the lighted windows
Of all the world, the Dark outside is nothing;
And all that limps and hides there in the dark;
Famishing, — broken, — lost!
And I have sworn
For her sake and for all, that I will have
Some justice, all so late, for wretched men,
Out of these same smug towns that drive us forth
After the show! — Or scheme to cage us up
Out of the sunlight; like a squirrel's heart
Torn out and drying in the market-place.
My mother! Do you know what mothers are? —
Your children! Do you know them? Ah? not you!
There's not one here but it would follow me,
For all your bleating!

AXEL'S WIFE. Kuno, come away!

[*The children cling to him. He smiles down triumphantly.*]

PIPER. Oho, Oho! Look you? — You preach — I pipe!

[*Reënter the men, with* KURT *and* JACOBUS, *from the Rathaus, murmuring dubiously. The* PIPER *sets down* JAN *and stands forth, smiling.*]

JACOBUS [*smoothly*]. H'm! My good man, we have faithfully debated
Whether your vision of so great a sum
Might be fulfilled, — as by some miracle.
But no. The moneys we administer
Will not allow it; nor the common weal.
Therefore, for your late service, here you have
Full fifteen guilders, [*holding forth a purse*] and a pretty sum
Indeed, for piping!

KURT [*ominously*]. Take them!

JACOBUS. Either that,
Or, to speak truly, nothing!

[*The* PIPER *is motionless.*]

Come, come. Nay, count them, if you will.

KURT. Times goes!

PIPER. Ay. And your oath?

KURT. No more; Enough.

[*There is a sound of organ music from the Minster.*]

VERONIKA [*beseechingly*]. Ah, Kurt!

KURT [*savagely to the crowd*]. What do ye, mewling of this fellow's rights?
He hath none! — Wit ye well, he is a stroller,
A wastrel, and the shadow of a man!
Ye waste the day and dally with the law.
Such have no rights; not in their life nor body!
We are in no wise bound. Nothing is his.

He may not carry arms; nor have redress
For any harm that men should put on him,
Saving to strike a shadow on the wall!
He is a Nothing, by the statute-book;
And, by the book, so let him live or die,
Like to a masterless dog!

[*The* PIPER *stands motionless with head upraised, not looking at* KURT. *The people, half-cowed, half-doubting, murmur and draw back. Lights appear in the Minster; the music continues.* KURT *and* JACOBUS *lead in the people.* JACOBUS *picks up the money-purse and takes it with him.*]

VOICES [*laughing, drunkenly*]. One thousand guilders to a "masterless dog"!

[*Others laugh, too, pass by, with pity and derision for the* PIPER, *and echoes of "Masterless Dog!" Exeunt* WOMEN *and* MEN *to the Minster. Only the children are left, dancing round the motionless figure of the* PIPER].

CHILDREN. Oh, pipe again! Oh, pipe and make us dance!
Oh, pipe and make us run away from school!
Oh, pipe and make believe we are the mice!

[*He looks down at them. He looks up at the houses. Then he signs to them, with his fingers on his lips; and begins, very softly, to pipe the Kinder-spell. The old* CLAUS *and* URSULA *in the windows seem to doze. The children stop first, and look at him, fascinated; then they laugh, drowsily, and creep closer,* — JAN *always near. They crowd around him. He pipes louder, moving backwards, slowly, with magical gestures, towards the little by-streets and the closed doors. The doors open, everywhere. Out come the children: little ones in nightgowns; bigger ones, with playthings, toy animals, dolls. He pipes, gayer and louder. They pour in, right and left. Motion and music fill the air. The* PIPER *lifts* JAN *to his shoulder (dropping the little crutch) and marches off, up the street, at the rear, piping, in the midst of them all. Last, out of the Minster come tumbling two little acolytes in red, and after them,* PETER *the Sacristan. He trips over them in his amazement and terror; and they are gone after the vanishing children before the church-people come out. The old folks lean from their windows.*]

OLD URSULA. The bell, the bell! the church bell! They're bewitched!

[*Peter rushes to the bell-rope and pulls it. The bell sounds heavily.*]

[*Reënter, from the church, the citizens by twos and threes and scores.*]

OLD URSULA. I told ye all, — I told ye! Devil's bargains! [*The bell.*]

[KURT, JACOBUS, *and the others appear.*]

KURT. Peter the Sacristan! Give by the bell.
What means this clangor?

PETER *the Sacristan.* They're bewitched! bewitched!

[*Still pulling and shouting.*]

URSULA. They're gone!

KURT. Thy wits!

OLD CLAUS. They're gone — they're gone — they're gone!

PETER *the Sacristan.* The children!

URSULA. — With the Piper! They're bewitched!
I told ye so.

OLD CLAUS. — I saw it with these eyes!
He piped away the children.

[*Horror in the crowd. They bring out lanterns and candles.* VERONIKA *holds up the forgotten crutch.*]

VERONINA. Jan — my Jan!

KURT [*to her*]. Thy boy! But mine, my three, all fair and straight. —

AXEL'S WIFE [*furiously to him*]. 'T was thy false bargain, thine; who would not pay
The Piper. — But we pay!

PETER *the Sacristan.* Bewitched, bewitched!
The boys ran out — and I ran after them,

And something red did trip me — 't was the Devil,
The Devil!

OLD URSULA. Ah, ring on, and crack the bell:
Ye'll never have them back. — I told ye so!
[*The bell clangs incessantly.*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE I. *Inside "the Hollow Hill." A great, dim-lighted, cavernous place, which shows signs of masonry. It is part cavern and part cellerage of a ruined, burned-down and forgotten old monastery in the hills. — The only entrance (at the centre rear), a ramshackle wooden door, closes against a flight of rocky steps. — Light comes from an opening in the roof, and from the right, where a faggot-fire glows under an iron pot. — The scene reaches (right and left) into dim corners, where sleeping children lie curled up together like kittens. By the fire sits the* PIPER, *on a tree-stump seat, stitching at a bit of red leather. At his feet is a row of bright-colored small shoes, set two and two. He looks up now and then, to recount the children, and goes back to work, with quizzical despair. Left, sits a group of three forlorn* STROLLERS. *One nurses a lame knee; one, evidently dumb, talks in signs to the others; one is munching bread and cheese out of a wallet. All have the look of hunted and hungry men. They speak only in whispers to each other throughout the scene; but their hoarse laughter breaks out now and then over the bird-like ignorance of the children. A shaft of sunlight steals through the hole in the roof.* JAN, *who lies nearest the* PIPER, *wakes up.*

JAN. Oh! [*The* PIPER *turns.*] Oh, I thought . . . I had a dream!

PIPER [*softly*]. Ahé?

JAN. I thought . . . I dreamed . . . somebody wanted me.

PIPER. Soho!

JAN [*earnestly*]. I thought . . . Somebody wanted me.

PIPER. How then?
[*With watchful tenderness.*]

JAN. I thought I heard Somebody crying.

PIPER. Pfui! — What a dream. — Don't make me cry again.

JAN. Oh, was it you? — Oh, yes!

PIPER [*apart, tersely*]. No Michael yet!
[JAN *begins to laugh softly, in a bewildered way; then grows quite happy and forgetful. While the other children waken, he reaches for the pipe and tries to blow upon it, to the* PIPER'S *amusement.* ILSE *and* HANSEL, *the Butcher's children, wake.*]

ILSE. Oh!

HANSEL. — Oh!

PIPER. Ahé?

ILSE. I thought I had a dream

PIPER. Again?

ISLE. . . . It was some lady, calling me.

HANSEL. Yes, and a fat man called us to come quick;
A fat man, he was crying — about me!
That same fat man I dreamt of, yesterday.

PIPER. Come, did you ever see a fat man cry,
About a little Boy?
[*The* STROLLERS *are convulsed with hoarse mirth.*]

HANSEL. No, — Never.

ILSE. Never!
Oh, what a funny dream!

PIPER [*checking the* STROLLERS, *with a gesture of warning towards the door*].
Strange sights of Hamelin through these little windows.
Come here, you dreamer. Tell me what he said.

HANSEL. He only said "*Come home!*"
But I did n't go.
I don't know where . . . Oh, what a funny dream!

ILSE. Mine was a bad dream! — *Mine* was a lovely lady
And she was by the river, staring in.

PIPER. You were the little gold-fish, none could catch.
Oh, what a funny dream! . . .
[*Apart, anxiously.*] No Michael yet.
[*Aloud*]. Come, bread and broth! Here — not all, three at a time;
'T is simpler. Here, you kittens. Eat awhile.

So there are tears in Hamelin; — warm, wet tears;
And maybe, salt. Who knows?
RUDI. Oh, I was dreaming!
[The PIPER *takes* JAN *on his knee and feeds him, after ladling out a big bowl of broth from the kettle for the* CHILDREN, *and giving them bread.]*
PIPER. Oh, I was dreaming, too!
CHILDREN. Oh, tell it to us!
PIPER. I dreamed . . . a Stork . . . had nested in my hat.
CHILDREN. Oh!
PIPER. And when I woke —
CHILDREN. You had —
PIPER. *One hundred children!*
CHILDREN. Oh, it came true! Oh, oh; it all came true!
THE STROLLERS. Ah, ho, ho, ho!
[The dumb one rises, stretches, and steals toward the entrance, stopping to slip a blind-patch over one eye. The PIPER *goes to him with one stride, seizing him by the shoulder.]*
PIPER *[to him, and the others, apart]*. Look you. — No Michael *yet!* — And he is gone!
Full three days now, — three days. If he be caught,
Why then, — the little ravens shall be fed!
[Groans from the three.]
Enough that Cheat-the-Devil leaked out too; —
No foot but mine shall quit this fox-hole now!
And you, — think praise for once, you have no tongue,
And keep these magpies quiet.
[Turns away.]
[To himself.] Ah, that girl.
The Burgomeister's Barbara! But for her,
And moon-struck Michael with his "one more look"!
Where is he now? — And where are we?
[Turning back to the CHILDREN.] So, so.
[The STROLLERS *huddle together, with looks of renewed anxiety and wretchedness. Their laughter at the* CHILDREN *breaks out forlornly now and then. The* PIPER *shepherds the* CHILDREN, *but with watchful eyes and ears toward the entrance always. His action grows more and more tense.]*
RUDI *[over his broth]*. Oh, I remember now! — Before I woke . . .
Oh, what an awful dream!
ILSE. Oh, tell us, Rudi, —
Oh, scare us, — Rudi, scare us! —
RUDI *[bursting into tears]*. . . . *Lump was dead!*
Lump, Lump! — *[The* CHILDREN *wail.]*
PIPER *[distracted]*. Who's Lump? —
RUDI. Our Dog!
PIPER *[shocked and pained]*. The Dog! — No, no.
Heaven save us — I forgot about the dogs!
RUDI. He Wanted me; — and I always was n't there!
And people tied him up, — and other people
Pretended that he bit. — He never bites!
He Wanted me, until it broke his heart,
And he was dead!
PIPER *[struggling with his emotion]*. And then he went to heaven,
To chase the happy cats up all the trees; —
Little white cats! . . . He wears a golden collar . . .
And sometimes — *[Aside]* — I'd forgot about the dogs!
Well, dogs must suffer, so that men grow wise.
'T was ever so.
[He turns to give JAN *a piping lesson.]*
CHILDREN. Oh, what a funny dream!
[Suddenly he lifts his hand. They listen, and hear a dim sound of distant chanting, going by on some neighboring road. The PIPER *is puzzled; the* STROLLERS *are plainly depressed.]*
JAN. What is it?
PIPER. People; passing down below, In the dark valley.
[He looks at the CHILDREN *fixedly.]*
Do you want to see them?
CHILDREN. Don't let them find us! What an ugly noise. —
No, no — don't let them come!
PIPER. Hark ye to me.
Some day I'll take you out with me to play;

High in the sun, — close to the waterfall. . . .
And we will make believe — *We'll make believe*
We're hiding!
[*The* STROLLERS *rock with mirth.*]
CHILDREN. Yes, yes! Oh, let us make believe!
STROLLERS. Oho, ho, ho! — A make-believe! — Ho, ho!
PIPER. But, if you're good, — yes, very very soon
I'll take you, as I promised, —
CHILDREN. — Gypsies, oh!
PIPER. Yes, with the gypsies. We shall go at night,
With just a torch — [*Watching them.*]
CHILDREN. Oh!
PIPER. Like fire-flies! Will-o'-the-wisps!
And make believe we're hiding, all the way,
Till we come out into a sunny land, —
All vines and sunlight, yes, and men that sing!
Far, far away — forever.
[*Gives* ILSE *a bowl to feed the other* CHILDREN. JAN *pipes a measure of the Kinder-spell, brokenly. The* PIPER *turns.*]
So! Thou'lt be
My master, some day. Thou shalt pipe for me.
JAN [*piping*]. Oh, was n't that one beautiful? — Now you!
PIPER [*taking the pipe*]. *The rainbow-bridge by day;*
— And borrow a shepherd-crook!
At night we take to the Milky Way;
And then we follow the brook!
We'll follow the brook, whatever way
The brook shall sing, or the sun shall say,
Or the mothering wood-dove coos!
And what do I care, what else I wear,
If I keep my rainbow shoes!
[*He points to the little row of bright shoes. The* CHILDREN *scream with joy.* ILSE *and* HANSEL *run back.*]
CHILDREN. Oh dear! What lovely shoes! Oh, which are mine?
Oh! Oh! — What lovely shoes! Oh, which are mine?
PIPER. Try, till you see.
[*Taking up a little red pair.*] But these, — these are for Jan.
[JAN *is perched on the tree-stump, shy and silent with pleasure.*]
ILSE. Oh, those are best of all! And Jan —
PIPER. And Jan
Is not to trudge, like you. Jan is to wear
Beautiful shoes, and shoes made most of all,
To look at!
[*Takes up a pair of bird's wings.*]
CHILDREN [*squealing*]. Oh! Where did you find the wings?
Bird's wings!
PIPER. There was some hunter in the woods,
Who killed more birds than he could carry home.
He did not want these, — though the starling did,
But could not use them more! And so, —
[*Fastening one to each heel.*] And so, —
They trim a little boy.
[*Puts them on* JAN. *He is radiant. He stretches out his legs and pats the feathers.*]
CHILDREN [*trying on theirs and capering*]. O Jan! — O Jan!
Oh! see my shoes!
[*The* PIPER *looks at* JAN.]
PIPER. Hey day, what now?
JAN. I wish . . .
PIPER. What do you wish? Wish for it! — It shall come.
[JAN *pulls him closer and speaks shyly.*]
JAN. I wish — that I could show them to the Man,
The Lonely Man.
[*The* PIPER *looks at him and backs away; sits down helplessly and looks at him again.*]
Oh, can I? —
PIPER. Thou! — 'T would make me a proud man.
JAN. Oh! it would make Him smile!
[*The* CHILDREN *dance and caper.* TRUDE *wakes up and joins them. Sound of distant chanting again.*]
TRUDE. — I had a dream!
PIPER. A dream!
[*Pretending to be amazed. Reflects, a moment.*]

I know! — Oh, what a funny dream!
[*The* CHILDREN *all fall a-laughing when he does. — Noise without.* CHEAT-THE-DEVIL'S *voice crying, "Cuckoo — Cuckoo!"*]
CHEAT-THE-DEVIL. Quick, quick! — I've something here.
[*The others roll away a big stone, and enter by the wooden door (rear),* CHEAT-THE-DEVIL. *He does not wear his red hood. He has a garland round his neck, and a basket on his arm.*]
PIPER [*sharply to himself*]. No Michael yet!
[*To* CHEAT-THE-DEVIL]. Michael! — Where's Michael?
CHEAT-THE-DEVIL. Look you, — you must wait.
We must be cunning. — There's a squirrel, mark you,
Hopped after me! He would have found us out.
I wanted him; I loved him. But I ran.
For once a squirrel falls a-talking. — Ah!
Look what I have. — Guess, guess!
[*Showing his basket to the* CHILDREN.]
CHILDREN. Cakes! [*He is sad.*]
Shoes! [*He is sadder*].
Then — honey!
[*He radiantly undoes his basket, and displays a honeycomb. The* STROLLERS, *too, rush upon him.*]
PIPER. Ah, Cheat-the-Devil! They would crop your ears.
Where had you this?
CHEAT-THE-DEVIL. Why, such a kind old farmer!
He'd left his bee-hives; they were all alone;
And the bees know me. So I brought this for you;
I knew They'd like it. — Oh, you're happy now!
PIPER. But Michael, — have they caught him?
CHEAT-THE-DEVIL. Oh, not they!
I heard no word of Michael; Michael's safe!
Once on the road I met a countryman,
Asked me the way. And not a word I spoke!
'T is far the wisest. Twenty riddles he asked me.
I smiled and wagged my head. Anon cries he,
"This Fool is deaf and dumb!" — That made me angry,
But still I spoke not. — And I would not hurt him!
He was a bad man. But I liked the mule.—
Now am I safe! — Now am I home at last!
PIPER. 'St. — Met you any people on the way,
Singing?
CHEAT-THE-DEVIL. No, growling, — growling dreary psalms
All on a sunny day! Behind the hedges,
I saw them go. They go from Hamelin, now;
And I know why! —
[*The* PIPER *beckons him away from the* CHILDREN.]
The mayor's Barbara
Must go to Rudersheim, to be a Nun!
PIPER. To be a Nun!
CHEAT-THE-DEVIL. A penance for them all.
She weeps; but she must go! All they, you see,
Are wroth against him. — He must give *his* child —
PIPER. A nun!
CHEAT-THE-DEVIL [*nodding*]. Forever! — She, who smiled at Michael.
Look you, she weeps! They are bad people all; —
Nothing like these.
[*Looking at the* CHILDREN.]
These are all beautiful.
PIPER. To lock her up! A maiden, shut away
Out of the sun. To cage her there for life,
Cut off her hair; pretend that she is dead! —
Horrible, horrible! No, I'll not endure it.
I'll end this murder. — He shall give up his;
But never so! — Not so! — While I do live
To let things out of cages! — Tell me, quick! —
When shall it happen?
CHEAT-THE-DEVIL. Why, it falls to-day.
I saw two herds of people going by,
To be there well aforetime, for the sight.
And she is going last of all, at noon;
All sparkling, like a Bride. — I heard them tell.

PIPER. No, never, never! — No, it shall not be!

[*Steps heard scrambling down the entranceway.*]

[*Enter* MICHAEL *in mad haste. They rush upon him with exultation and relief. He shakes them off, doggedly.*]

PIPER. So! — You had like to have hanged us.

MICHAEL. — What of that?

PIPER. All for a lily maiden.

MICHAEL. Ah, — thy pipe!

How will it save her? — *Save her!* — Tune thy pipe

To compass that! — You do not know —

PIPER. I know.

Tell me no more. — I say it shall not be!

To heel, lad! No, I follow, — none but I!

Go, — go! [MICHAEL *rushes out again.*]

[*To* CHEAT-THE-DEVIL, *pointing to the* CHILDREN.] Do you bide here and shepherd these.

CHILDREN. Where are you going? — Take us too! — us too! —

Oh, take us with you? — Take us!

PIPER [*distracted*]. No, no, no!

You shall be kittens all. And chase your tails,

Till I come back! — So here!

[*Catches* HANSEL *and affixes to his little jacket a long strip of leather for a tail; then whirls him about.*]

CHILDREN. Me too! — Me too!

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL. Let me make tails, — let me!

[*Seizing shears and leather.*]

PIPER [*wildly*]. Faith, and you shall.

A master tailor! — Come, here's food for thought.

Think all, —

[*To the* STROLLERS.] And hold your tongues there! —

If a Cat—

If a Cat have — as all men say — Nine Lives,

And if Nine Tailors go to make a Man,

How long, then shall it take one Man turned Tailor

To keep a Cat in Tails, until she die?

[CHEAT-THE-DEVIL *looks subdued; the* CHILDREN *whirl about.*]

But here's no game for Jan. — Stay! Something else. —

[*He runs to a wooden coffer, rear, and takes out a long crystal on the end of a string, with a glance at the shaft of sunlight from the roof. The* CHILDREN *watch.*]

Be quiet, now. — Chase not your tails too far,

Till I come home again.

CHILDREN. Come home — come home!

PIPER. And you shall see my —

CHILDREN. Something Beautiful!

Oh, oh, what is it? — Oh, and will it play?

Will it play music?

PIPER. Yes.

[*He hangs the crystal in the sun. A Rainbow strikes the wall.*]

— The best of all!

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL, JAN, CHILDREN. Oh, oh, how beautiful, — how beautiful!

PIPER. And hear it pipe and call, and dance, and sing.

Héjà! — And hark you all. You have to mind —

The Rainbow!

[*He climbs out, pipe in hand. The* CHILDREN *whirl about after their tails.* — CHEAT-THE-DEVIL, *and* JAN *on his tree-stump, open-mouthed with happiness, watch the Rainbow.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE II. *The Cross-ways on the Long Road to Rudersheim. A wooded country, high hills at back. The place is wild and overgrown, like the haunted spot it is reputed to be. In the foreground, right, a ruined stone well appears, in a mass of weeds and vines. Opposite, left, tall trees and dense thickets. Where the roads cross (to left of centre), stands a large, neglected shrine, with a weather-worn figure of Christ, — again the "Lonely Man," — facing toward Hamelin. The stage is empty, at rise of the curtain; but the sound of chanting from burghers just gone by fades slowly, on the road to Rudersheim. From the hillside at the rear comes the* PIPER, *wrapped in a long green cloak, his pipe in his hand. He looks after the procession, and back to Hamelin.*

[*Enter, springing from the bushes to the right,* MICHAEL, *who seizes him. Their speech goes breathlessly.*]

MICHAEL. Quick! — tell me —

PIPER. — Patience.

MICHAEL. Patience? — Death and hell!
Oh, save her — save her! Give the children back.

PIPER. Never. Have you betrayed us?

MICHAEL. I! — betrayed?

PIPER. So, so, lad.

MICHAEL. But to save her —

PIPER. There's a way, —
Trust me! I save her, or we swing together
Merrily, in a row. — How did you see her?

MICHAEL. By stealth, two days ago, at evening,
Hard by the vine-hid wall of her own garden,
I made a warbling like a nightingale;
And she came out to hear.

PIPER. A serenade!
Under the halter!

MICHAEL. Hush. — A death-black night,
Until she came. — Oh, how to tell thee, lad!
She came, — she came, not for the nightingale,
But even dreaming that it would be I!

PIPER. She knew you? — We are trapped, then.

MICHAEL. No, not so!
She smiled on me. — Dost thou remember how
She smiled on me that day? Alas, poor maid,
She took me for some noble in disguise!
And all these days, — she told me, — she had dreamed
That I would come to save her!

PIPER. Said she this?

MICHAEL. All this — all this, and more! . . .
What could lies do? — I lied to her of thee;
I swore I knew not of thy vanishment,
Nor the lost children. But I told her true,
I was a stroller and an outcast man
That hid there, like a famished castaway,
For one more word, one look, without a hope.
Helpless to save her.

PIPER. And she told thee then,
She goes to be a nun?

MICHAEL. Youth to the grave!
And I — vile nothing — cannot go to save her,
Only to look my last —

PIPER. Who knows?

MICHAEL [*bitterly*]. Ah, thou —

PIPER. Poor Nightingale!
[*Fingers his pipe, noiselessly.*]

MICHAEL [*rapt with grief*]. Oh, but the scorn of her!

PIPER. She smiled on thee.

MICHAEL. Until she heard the truth: —
A juggler, — truly, — and no wandering knight!
Oh, and she wept.
[*Wildly.*] Let us all hang together.

PIPER. Thanks. Kindly spoken. — Not this afternoon!

MICHAEL. Thou knowest they are given up for dead?

PIPER. Truly.

MICHAEL. Bewitched?

PIPER. So are they.

MICHAEL. Sold to the Devil?

PIPER [*pacing softly up and down, with the restless cunning of a squirrel at watch*]. Pfui! But who else? Of course. This same old Devil!
This kind old Devil takes on him all we do!
Who else is such a refuge in this world?
Who could have burned the abbey in this place,
Where holy men did live? Why, 't was the Devil!
And who did guard us one secluded spot
By burying a wizard at this cross-ways? —
So none dare search the haunted, evil place!
The Devil for a landlord! — So say I!
And all we poor, we strollers, for his tenants;
We gypsies and we pipers in the world,
And a few hermits and sword-swallowers,
And all the cast-aways that Holy Church
Must put in cages — cages — to the end!
[*To* MICHAEL, *who is overcome.*] Take heart!
I swear, — by all the stars that chime!
I'll not have things in Cages!

MICHAEL. Barbara!
So young, — so young and beautiful!

PIPER. And fit
To marry with friend Michael!

MICHAEL. Do not mock.

PIPER. I mock not. — (Baa — Baa — Barbara!
MICHAEL. Ay, she laughed,
On that first day. But still she gazed. — I saw
Her, all the while! I swallowed —
PIPER. Prodigies!
A thousand swallows, and no summer yet!
But now, — 't is late to ask, — why did you not
Swallow her father? — That had saved us all.
MICHAEL. They will be coming soon. They will cut off
All her bright hair, — and wall her in forever.
PIPER. Never. They shall not.
MICHAEL [*dully*]. Will you give them back,
Now?
PIPER. I will never give them back. Be sure.
MICHAEL. And she is made an offering for them all.
I heard it of the gossips. — They have sworn
Jacobus shall not keep his one ewe-lamb
While all the rest go childless.
PIPER. And I swear
That he shall give her up, — to none but thee!
MICHAEL. You cannot do it!
PIPER. Have I lived like Cain,
But to make good one hour of Life and Sun?
And have I got this Hamelin in my hands,
To make it pay its thousand cruelties
With such a fool's *one-more?* . . .
— You know right well,
'T was not the thousand guilders that I wanted
For thee, or me, or any! — Ten would serve.
But there it ached; *there*, in the money-bag
That serves the town of Hamelin for an heart!
That stab was mortal! And I thrust it deep.
Life, life, I wanted; safety, — sun and wind! —
And but to show them how that daily fear
They call their faith, is made of blasphemies
That would put out the Sun and Moon and Stars,
Early, for some last judgment!
[*He laughs up to the tree-tops.*]
And the Lord,
Where will He get his Harpers and singing-men
And them that laugh for joy? — From Hamelin guilds? —
Will you imagine Kurt the Councillor
Trying to sing?
[*He looks at his pipe again; then listens intently.*]
MICHAEL. His lean throat freeze! — But, she —
Barbara! Barbara! —
PIPER. Patience. She will come,
Dressed like a bride.
MICHAEL. Ah, do not mock me so.
PIPER. I mock not.
MICHAEL. She will never look at me.
PIPER. Rather than be a nun, I swear she will
Look at thee twice, — and with a long, long look.
[*Chant approaches in the distance, coming from Hamelin.*]
VOICES. *Dies irae, dies illa*
Solvet saeclum in favilla,
Teste David cum Sibylla.

Quantus tremor est futurus,
Quando judex est venturus,
Cuncta stricte discussurus!
PIPER. Bah, how they whine! Why do they drag it so?
MICHAEL [*overcome*]. Oh, can it be the last of all? O Saints! —
O blessed Francis, Ursula, Catherine!
Hubert — and Crispin — Pantaleone — Paul!
George o' the Dragon! — Michael the Archangel!
PIPER. Michael Sword-eater, canst not swallow a chant?
The well, the well! — Take care.
VOICES [*nearer*]. *Inter oves locum praesta,*
Et ab hoedis me sequestra,
Statuens in parte dextra.

Confutatis maledictis,
Flammis acribus addictis
Voca me cum benedictis.
[MICHAEL *climbs down the ancient well, reaching his head up warily*

to see. The PIPER *waves to him debonairly, points to the tree-tops, left, and stands a moment showing in his face his disapproval of the music. He fingers his pipe. As the hymn draws near, he scrambles among the bushes, left, and disappears.*]

[*Enter slowly, chanting, the company of burghers from Hamelin, — men together first, headed by priests; then the women. —* ANSELM *and all the townsfolk appear (saving* VERONIKA, *the wife of* KURT); JACOBUS *is meek;* KURT *very stern. — As they appear, the piping of the Dance-spell begins softly, high in air. The hymn wavers; when the first burghers reach the centre of the stage, it breaks down. They look up, bewildered; then, with every sign of consternation, struggle, and vacant fear, they begin to dance, willy-nilly. Their faces work; they struggle to walk on; but it is useless. The music whirls them irresistibly into a rhythmic pace of* ♩ *time, and jogs their words, when they try to speak, into the same dance-measure. One by one, — two and two they go, — round and round like corks at first, with every sign of struggle and protest, then off, on the long road to Rudersheim. Fat priests waltz together. —* KURT *the fierce and* JACOBUS *the sleek hug each other in frantic endeavor to be released. Their words jolt insanely.*]

KURT, JACOBUS. { No, no. — No, no. — / No, no. — No, no! / Yes, yes. — I, yes. — / Yes, yes. — Yes, yes!

SOME. { *La — crymos — a — Dies — ill —* / Bewitched — the Devil! — bewitched — bewitched! / I will not — will not — will — I will! / No, no — but where! — Help — help! — To arms!

OTHERS. { *Suppli — canti — suppli — Oh!* / To Hamelin — back — to Hamelin — stay! / No, no! — No, no, — Away, — away!

[*They dance out convulsively, towards Rudersheim.* KURT *and* JACOBUS, *still whirling, cry.*]

JACOBUS, KURT. { Yes, yes! — yes, yes! / — Let go — let go — / No, no! — I will not — / No! . . . No!

[*Exeunt, left, dancing.*]

OTHERS. { Keep time, keep time! Have mercy! — Time! / Oh, let me — go! — Let go — let go! / Yes, yes — Yes, yes — No, no — no — no!

[BARBARA *appears, pale and beautiful; — richly dressed in white, with flowing locks. She is wan and exhausted. — The dance-mania, as it seizes her, makes her circle slowly and dazedly with a certain pitiful silliness. The nuns and monks accompanying her point in horror. But they, too, dance off with each other, willy-nilly, — like leaves in a tempest.* BARBARA *is left alone, still circling slowly. The piping sounds softer. She staggers against a tree, and keeps on waving her hands and turning her head, vaguely, in time.* MICHAEL *looks forth from the well; then climbs out and approaches her.*]

MICHAEL. She is so beautiful, — how dare I tell her?
My heart, how beautiful! The blessed saint! . . .
Fear nothing, fairest Lady. — You are saved.

[*She looks at him unseeingly, and continues to dance. — He holds out his arms to stop her.*]

Pray you, the danger's gone. Pray you, take breath!
Poor, shining dove, — I would not hold thee here,
Against thy wish. — 'T is Michael, the sword-eater. [*The piping ceases.*]

BARBARA [*murmuring*]. Yes, yes — I must — I must — I must . . .

[*Reënter the* PIPER *from the thickets.*]

MICHAEL. Look, I will guard you like a princess, here;
Yes, like Our Lady's rose-vine.

BARBARA [*gasping*]. Ah, my heart!
[*The* PIPER *comes towards her. She sees him and holds out her arms, crying:*]
Oh, he has saved me! — I am thine — thine — thine!
[*Falls into his arms half-fainting. The* PIPER *stands amazed, alarmed, chagrined.*]
PIPER. Mine?
MICHAEL [*furiously*]. *Thine?* — So was it? All a trap? Cock's blood!
Thine, thine! — And thou hast piped her wits away.
Thine!
PIPER [*holding her off*]. No, not mine!
BARBARA [*to him*]. Why did you steal me hence?
When did you love me? — Was it on first sight?
PIPER [*confounded*]. I, love thee?
MICHAEL. — *Knave! thief! liar!*
PIPER. — Give me breath.
[*Holds off* BARBARA *gently.*]
BARBARA. Where are you taking me?
PIPER. I? Taking thee?
MICHAEL [*to her*]. He shall not steal thee!
BARBARA [*in a daze*]. I must follow him.
PIPER. *No!* 'T is too much. You shall not follow me!
I'll not be followed. — Damsel, sit you down.
Here is too much.! I love you not.
BARBARA [*wonderingly*]. You do not?
Why did you pipe to me?
MICHAEL. — And steal her wits,
Stealer of all the children!
BARBARA [*vaguely*]. Are they safe?
PIPER [*to* MICHAEL]. Oh, your good faith! —
[*To her.*] They're safe.
BARBARA. I knew — I knew it!
PIPER. And so art thou. But never shall they go
To Hamelin more; and never shalt *thou* go
To be a nun.
BARBARA. To be a nun, — no, no! Ah me, I'm spent.
Sir, take me with you.
MICHAEL [*still enraged, to the* PIPER]. Rid her of the spell!
Is this thy pledge?
PIPER [*distracted*]. I do but rub my wits
To think — to think.
[*To himself*]. What shall I do with her,
Now she is here? What if she stayed? — Forever?
[*To them.*] Hearken. — You, Michael, on to Rudersheim —
MICHAEL. And leave her here? No, no!
PIPER. Then take the girl.
BARBARA. To Rudersheim? No, never, never!
PIPER. Well . . .
Hearken. — There is the hermit, over the hill. [*Apart, wildly.*]
But how — suppose she will not marry him?
I will not take her where the children are.
And yet — [*An idea strikes him. To her.*]
Hark, now; — hark now, and tell me truly:
Can you spin cloth?
BARBARA [*amazed*]. I? Spin?
PIPER [*eagerly*]. Can you make shoes?
BARBARA. I — *I* make shoes! — Fellow!
PIPER. So.
MICHAEL. Art thou mad!
PIPER. With me you may not go! But you'll be safe.
Hearken: — you, Michael, go to Rudersheim;
And tell the nuns —
BARBARA. No, no! I dare not have it!
Oh, they would send and take me! No, no, no!
PIPER. Would you go back to Hamelin?
BARBARA. No — no — no!
Ah, I am spent.
[*Droops towards the* PIPER; *falters and sinks down on the bank beside the well, in a swoon. — The* PIPER *is abashed and rueful for the moment.*]
MICHAEL. All this, your work!
PIPER [*looking at her closely*]. Not mine.
This is no charm. It is all youth and grief.
And weariness. And she shall follow you.—
Tell the good nuns you found her sore bewitched,
Here in this haunt of "devils"; — clean distraught,
No Church could so receive a dancing nun!
Tell them thou art an honest, piteous man
Desires to marry her.
MICHAEL. Marry the Moon!

PIPER. No, no, the Moon for me! — She shall be yours;
And here she sleeps, until her wits be sound.
[*He spreads his cloak over her, gently.*]
The sun's still high. 'T is barely afternoon.
[*Looks at the sunshine. A thought strikes him with sudden dismay.*]
'T is — no, the time is going! — On my life
I had forgot Them! — And They will not stay
After the Rainbow fades.
MICHAEL [*confounded*]. Art thou moon-mad?
PIPER [*madly*]. No. Stir not! Keep her safe! I come anon.
But first I go. — They'll not mind Cheat-the-Devil!
They'll creep, to find out where the Rainbow went.
I know them! So would I! — They'll all leak out!
MICHAEL. Stay — stay
PIPER. No; guard her, you! — Anon, anon!
MICHAEL. But you will pipe her up and after you!
PIPER [*flinging him the pipe from his belt*]. Do you fear this? Then keep it till I come.
You bide! — The Other cannot.
MICHAEL. Who?
PIPER. *The Rainbow, The Rainbow!* —
[*He runs madly up the hillside, and away.*]

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE: *The same, later.* BARBARA *lies motionless, still sleeping.* — MICHAEL, *sitting on the bank opposite, fingers the pipe with awe and wistfulness. He blows softly upon it; then looks at the girl hopefully. She does not stir.*

[*Enter the* PIPER, *from the hills at back. He carries a pair of water-jars slung over his shoulders, and seems to be in high feather.*]

PIPER [*singing*]. *Out of your cage,*
Come out of your cage
And take your soul on a pilgrimage!
Pease in your shoes, an if you must! —
But out and away, before you're dust:
Scribe and Stay-at-home,
Saint and Sage,
Out of your cage,
Out of your cage! —
[*He feigns to be terror-struck at sight of the pipe in* MICHAEL'S *hands.*]
Ho, help! Good Michael, Michael, loose the charm!
Michael, have mercy! I'm bewitched! —
MICHAEL [*giving him the pipe*]. Cock's faith!
Still mocking! — Well ye know, it will not play
Such games for me.
PIPER. Be soothed, — 't was as I guessed
[*Unslings the jars.*]
All of them hungry, — and the Rainbow going; —
And Cheat-the-Devil pining in a corner.
'T was well I went: they were for leaking out,
And then, — lopped ears for two!
MICHAEL. Oh, that will come.
PIPER. Never believe it! We have saved her, look you;
We save them all! No prison walls again,
For anything so young, in Hamelin there.
Wake her, and see.
MICHAEL. Ay, wake her But for me,
Her sleep is gentler.
PIPER [*comfortingly*]. Nay, but wait. — Good faith,
Wait. We have broke the bars of iron now;
Still there are golden! — 'T is her very self
Is caged within herself. Once coax her out,
Once set her own heart free! —
MICHAEL. Wake her, and see!
[*The* PIPER *crosses, humming.*]
PIPER. *Mind your eyes, tune your tongue!*
Let it never be said, but sung, — sung;
"Out of your cage, out of your cage!"
Maiden, maiden, —
[*He wakes her gently.* BARBARA *sits up, plainly bewildered; then she sees the* PIPER, *and says happily:*]
BARBARA. Oh! — you have come to save me. They are gone.
All this, for love of me!

PIPER [*ruefully*]. No, no — I — *No!*
BARBARA. You — you are robbers?
[*Her hands go to the pearls about her neck.*]
PIPER [*indignant*]. No! Blood on the Moon!
This is the maddest world I ever blinked at. —
Fear nothing, maiden. I will tell you all.
Come, sit you down; and Michael shall keep watch
From yonder hillock, lest that any pass.
Fear nothing. None will pass: they are too sure
The Devil hath this cross-ways! — Sit you down.
[MICHAEL *watches, with jealous wistfulness, from the road (left rear).* — BARBARA *half fearfully sits up, on the bank by the well.*]
BARBARA. Not love? And yet . . . you do not want my pearls?
Then why —
PIPER. For why should all be love or money?
Money! Oho, — that mouldy thousand guilders
You think of! — But it was your Hamelin friends
That loved the guilders, and not I.
BARBARA. Then why —
Why did you steal me hence?
PIPER. Why did yourself
Long to be stolen?
BARBARA [*shuddering*]. Ah! to be shut up . . .
Forever, — young — alive!
PIPER. Alive and singing;
Young, — young; — and four thick walls and no more sun,
No music, and no wandering, and no life!
Think you, I would not steal all things alive
Out of such doom? — How can I breathe and laugh
While there are things in cages? — You are free;
And you shall never more go back again.
BARBARA. And you, who are you then?
PIPER. How do *I* know?
Moths in the Moon! — Ask me a thing in reason.
BARBARA. And 't was not . . . that you loved me.
PIPER. Loved thee? No! —
Save but along with squirrels, and bright fish,
And bubbling water.
BARBARA. Then where shall I go?
PIPER. Oh, little bird, — is that your only song?
Go? Everywhere! Here be no walls, no hedges,
No tolls, no taxes, — rats nor aldermen!
Go, say you? Round the world, and round again!
[*Apart*]. — Ah, she was Hamelin-born.
[*He watches her.*]
But there's a man, —
Sky-true, sword-strong, and brave to look upon;
One that would thrust his hand in dragon's mouth
For your bright sake; one that would face the Devil,
Would swallow fire —
BARBARA. You would?
PIPER [*desperately*]. *I?* — No, not I!
Michael, — yon goodman Michael.
BARBARA [*bitterly*]. A stroller! — oh, nought but a wandering man.
PIPER. Well, would you have a man take root, I ask?
BARBARA. That swallows swords. . . .
PIPER. Is he a comely man?
BARBARA. That swallows swords! —
PIPER. What's manlier to swallow?
Did he but swallow pancakes, were that praise?
Pancakes and sausage, like your Hamelin yokels?
He swallows fire and swords, I say, and more.
And yet this man hath for a whole noon-hour
Guarded you while you slept; — still as a dove,
Distant and kind as shadow; giant-strong
For his enchanted princess, — even you.
BARBARA. So you bewitched me, then.
PIPER [*wildly*]. How do I know?
BARBARA. Where are the children?
PIPER. I'll not tell you that.
You are too much of Hamelin.

BARBARA. You bewitched them!
PIPER. Yes, so it seems. But how? — Upon my life,
'T is more than I know, — yes, a little more.
[*Rapidly; half in earnest and half in whimsy.*]
Sometimes it works, and sometimes no. There are
Some things upon my soul, I cannot do.
[*Watching her.*]
BARBARA [*expectantly*]. Not even with thy pipe?
PIPER. Not even so.
Some are too hard. — Yet, yet, I love to try:
And most, to try with all the hidden charms
I have, that I have never counted through.
BARBARA [*fascinated*]. Where are they?
PIPER [*touching his heart*]. Here.
BARBARA. Where are they?
PIPER. How do I know?
If I knew all, why should I care to live?
No, no! The game is What-Will Happen-Next?
BARBARA. And what will happen?
PIPER [*tantalizingly*]. Ah! how do I know?
It keeps me searching. 'T is so glad and sad
And strange to find out, What-Will-Happen-Next!
And mark you this; the strangest miracle . . .
BARBARA. Yes! —
PIPER. Stranger than the Devil or the Judgment;
Stranger than piping, — even when *I* pipe!
Stranger than charming mice — or even men —
BARBARA [*with tense expectancy*]. What is it? What?
PIPER [*watching her*]. Why, — what may come to pass
Here in the heart. There is one very charm —
BARBARA. Oh!
PIPER. Are you brave?
BARBARA [*awe-struck*]. Oh!
PIPER [*slowly*]. Will you drink the philter?
BARBARA. 'T is . . . some enchantment?
PIPER [*mysteriously*]. 'T is a love philter.
BARBARA. Oh, tell me first —
PIPER. Why, sooth, the only charm
In it, is Love. It is clear well-water.
BARBARA [*disappointed*]. Only well-water?
PIPER. Love is only Love.
It must be philters, then?
[*He comes down smiling and beckons to* MICHAEL, *who draws near, bewildered.*]
This lady thirsts
For magic!
[*He ties a long green scarf that he has over his shoulder, to a water-jar, and lowers it down the old well; while* BARBARA *watches, awe-struck. He continues to sing softly.*]
Mind your eyes,
Tune your tongue;
Let it never be said,
But sung, — sung! —
. . . . . .
MICHAEL [*to* BARBARA, *timidly*]. I am glad at least, fair lady,
To think how my poor show did give you pleasure
That day — that day when —
BARBARA. Ah! that day of doom!
MICHAEL. What is your will?
BARBARA [*passionately*]. I know not; and I care not!
[*Apart*]. Oh, it is true. — And he a sword-eater!
[*The* PIPER *hauls up the jar, full of water.*]
PIPER. Michael, your cup.
[MICHAEL *gives him a drinking-horn from his belt. The* PIPER *filled it with water, solemnly, and turns to* BARBARA, *who is at first defiant, then fascinated.*]
Maiden, your ears. So: — hearken.
Before you drink of this, is it your will
Forever to be gone from Hamelin?
BARBARA. I must, — I must.
PIPER. Your mother?
BARBARA [*piteously*]. I have no mother;
Nor any father, more. He gave me up.
PIPER. That did he! — For a round one thousand guilders!
Weep not, I say! First, loose you, heart and shoes,

From Hamelin. Put off now, the dust, the mould,
The cobble-stones, the little prying windows;
The streets that dream o' *What the Neighbors Say.*
Think you were never born there. Think some Breath
Wakened you early — early on one morning,
Deep in a Garden (but you knew not whose),
Where voices of wild waters bubbling ran,
Shaking down music from glad mountain-tops, —
Where the still peaks were burning in the dawn,
Like fiery snow, — down to the listening valleys,
That do off their blue mist only to show
Some deeper blue, some haunt of violets.
No voice you heard, nothing you felt or saw,
Save in your heart, the tumult of young birds,
A nestful of wet wings and morning-cries,
Throbbing for flight! . . .
Then, — for your Soul, new wakened, felt athirst,
You turned to where that call of water led,
Laughing for truth, — all truth and star-like laughter!
Beautiful water, that will never stay,
But runs and laughs and sparkles in the heart,
And sends live laughter trickling everywhere,
And knows the thousand longings of the Earth!
And as you drank it then, so now, drink here;

[*He reaches her the horn. She has listened, motionless, like a thing bewitched, her eyes fixed and wide, as if she were sleep-walking. She drinks.* MICHAEL *stands near, also motionless. When she speaks, it is in a younger voice, shy, sweet, and full of wonder.*]

And tell me, — tell me, you, — what happened then?
What do you see?

BARBARA. Ah! —

[*She looks before her with wide, new eyes.*]

PIPER. Do you see — a —

BARBARA. . . . Michael!

PIPER. So! — And a good one. And you call him? —

BARBARA. . . . Michael.

PIPER. So. — 'T is a world of wonders, by my faith! —
What is the fairest thing you see but —

BARBARA. Michael.

PIPER. And is he comely as a man should be?
And strong? — And wears good promise in his eyes,
And keeps it with his heart and with his hands? [*She nods like a child.*]
And would you fear to go with him? —

BARBARA. No, no!

PIPER. Then reach to him that little hand of yours.

[MICHAEL, *wonder-struck, runs to the jar, pours water upon his hand, rubs it off with haste, and falls on his knees before her, taking her hand fearfully.*]

BARBARA [*timidly*]. And can he talk? —

PIPER. Yes, yes. — The maid 's bewildered.
Fear nothing. Thou 'rt so dumb, man! — Yes, yes, yes.
Only he kneels; he cannot yet believe.
Speak roundly to him. — Will you go with him?
He will be gentler to you than a father:
He would be brothers five, and dearest friend,
And sweetheart, — ay, and knight and serving-man!

BARBARA. Yes, yes, I know he will. And can he talk, too?

PIPER. Lady, you have bewitched him.

MICHAEL. Oh! dear Lady,
With you — with you, I dare not ope my mouth
Saving to sing, or pray!

PIPER. Let it be singing!
Lad, 't is a wildered maiden, with no home
Save only thee; and she is more a child
Than yesterday.

MICHAEL. Oh, lordly, wondrous world!
How is it, Sweet, you smile upon me now?

BARBARA. Sure I have ever smiled on thee. How not?
Art thou not Michael? — *And thou lovest me.*
And I love thee! — If I unloved thee ever,
It was some spell. —
[*Rapturously*]. But this, — ah, *This is I!*
[MICHAEL, *on his knees, winds his arms about her.*]
PIPER [*softly*]. It is all true, — all true.
Lad, do not doubt;
The golden cage is broken.
MICHAEL. Oh! more strange
Than morning dreams! I am like one newborn;
I am a speechless babe. — And this is she,
My Moon I cried for, — here, —
PIPER. It is thy bride.
MICHAEL. Thou wilt not fear to come with me?
BARBARA. With thee?
With thee! Ah, look. What have I more than thee?
And thou art mine, tall fellow! How comes it now
Right happily that I am pranked so fair!
[*She touches her fineries, her long pearl-strings, joyously.*]
And all this came so near to burying;
This!
MICHAEL. And this dearer gold.
[*Kissing her hair.*]
BARBARA. All, all for thee! —
[*She leans over in a playful rapture and binds her hair about him.*]
Look, — I will be thy garden that we lost,
Yea, everywhere, — in every wilderness.
There shall none fright us with a flaming sword!
But I will be thy garden!
[*There is the sound of a herd-bell approaching.*]
PIPER. See, — how the sunlight soon shall pour red wine
To make your marriage-feast! — And do you hear
That faery bell? — No fear! — 'T is some white creature,
Seeking her whiter lamb. — Go, find our hermit;
And he shall bless you, — as a hermit can!
And be your pledge for shelter. There 's the path. —
[*To* MICHAEL]. Follow each other, close!
MICHAEL. Beyond the Sun!
PIPER. A golden afternoon, — and all is well!
[*He gives* MICHAEL *his cloak to wrap round* BARBARA. *They go, hand in hand, up into the hills. The herd-bell sounds softly. —* The PIPER *cocks his head like a squirrel, and listens with delight. He watches the two till they disappear; then comes down joyously.*]
PIPER. If you can only catch them while they 're young!
[*The herd-bell sounds nearer. He lets down a water-jar into the well again. The nearness of the bell startles him. He becomes watchful as a wild creature. It sounds nearer and nearer. A woman's voice calls like the wind: "Jan! Jan!" —* The PIPER, *tense and cautious, moves softly down into the shrubbery by the well.*]
VERONIKA'S VOICE. Jan!
PIPER. Hist! Who dared?
VERONIKA'S VOICE. . . . Jan!
PIPER. Who dared, I say?
A woman. — 'T is a woman!

[*Enter* VERONIKA, *on the road from Hamelin. She is very pale and worn, and drags herself along, clutching in her hand a herd-bell. She looks about her, holds up the bell and shakes it once softly, covering it with her fingers again; then she sits wearily down at the foot of the ruined shrine, and covers her face, with a sharp breath.*]

VERONIKA. . . . Ah, — ah, — ah!
[*The* PIPER *watches with breathless wonder and fascination. It seems to horrify him.*]
PIPER [*under breath*]. That woman!
[VERONIKA *lifts her head suddenly and sees the motion of the bushes.*]
VERONIKA. He is coming! — He is here!
[*She darts towards the well. —* The PIPER *springs up.*]

Oh, God of Mercy! . . . It is only you!
Where is he? — Where? — Where are you
hiding him?
PIPER [*confusedly*]. Woman . . . what
do you, wandering, with that bell?
That herd-bell?
VERONIKA. Oh! are you man or cloud?
. . . Where is my Jan?
Jan, — Jan, — the little lame one! He is
mine.
He lives, I know he lives. I know — yes, yes.
[*She crouches where she is, watching
him.*]
PIPER. Surely he lives!
VERONIKA. — *Lives!* will you swear it?
Ah, —
I will believe! But he . . . is not so strong
As all the others.
PIPER [*apart*]. Aië, how horrible!
[*To her.*] Sit you down here. You cannot go
away
While you are yet so pale. Why are you
thus?
[*She looks at him distractedly.*]
VERONIKA. You, who have torn the
hearts out of our bodies
And left the city like a place of graves, —
Why am I spent? — Ah, ah! — But he's
alive!
PIPER [*fiercely*]. Alive? What else? —
Why would he not be living?
VERONIKA. I do not know.
PIPER. Do you take me for the Devil?
VERONIKA. I do not know.
PIPER. Yet you were not afraid?
VERONIKA. What is there now to fear?
PIPER [*watching her*]. Where are the
townsfolk?
VERONIKA. They are all gone to Ruder-
sheim . . .
PIPER [*still watchful*]. How so?
VERONIKA. Where, for a penance, Bar-
bara, Jacob's daughter,
Will take the veil. His one, for all of ours!
It will be over now.
PIPER. Have none returned?
VERONIKA. I know not; I am searching,
since the dawn.
PIPER. To-day?
VERONIKA. And every day.
Piper. That herd-bell, there —
Why do you bring it?
VERONIKA [*sobbing*]. Oh, he loves them
so.
I knew, if he but heard it, he would follow,
An if he could. Only, the ways are rough —
PIPER. No more. I know!
VERONIKA. — And he had lost his crutch.
PIPER [*like a wounded animal*]. Let be.
You hurt me —
VERONIKA. You! — A man of air?
PIPER. I am no man of air.
VERONIKA. — What are you, then?
Give them to me, I say. You have them hid,
Under a spell.
PIPER [*struggling with pity*]. Yes.
VERONIKA. Give them back to me.
PIPER. No.
VERONKIA. But they all . . . are living?
On thy soul?
PIPER. — Wilt thou believe me?
VERONIKA. And you hold them safe?
PIPER. Safe.
VERONIKA. Shut away?
PIPER. From Hamelin; forever.
VERONIKA. And are they . . . warm?
PIPER. — Yes.
VERONIKA. Are they happy? — Oh,
That cannot be! — But do they laugh,
sometimes?
PIPER. Yes.
VERONIKA. — Then you'll give them
back again!
PIPER. No, never.
VERONIKA [*half to herself, distraught be-
tween suspense and hope.*] I must be
patient.
PIPER. Woman, they all are mine.
I hold them in my hands; they bide with
me.
What's breath and blood, — what are the
hearts of children,
To Hamelin, — while it heaps its money-
bags?
VERONIKA. You cared not for the money.
PIPER. No? — You seem
A foreign woman, — come from very far,
That you should know.
VERONIKA. I know. I was not born
There. But you wrong them. There were
yet a few
Who would have dealt with you more
honestly
Than this Jacobus, or —

PIPER. Or Kurt the Syndic!
Believe it not. Those two be tongue and brain
For the whole town! I know them. And that town
Stands as the will of other towns, a score,
That make us wandering poor the things we are!
It stands for all, unto the end of time,
That turns this bright world black and the Sun cold,
With hate, and hoarding; — all-triumphant Greed
That spreads above the roots of all despair,
And misery, and rotting of the soul!
Now shall they learn — if money-bags can learn —
What turns the bright world black, and the Sun cold;
And what's that creature that they call a child! —
And what this wingèd thing men name a heart,
Never to bind, never to bid be still;
And what this hunger and this thirst to sing,
To laugh, to fight, — to hope, to be *believed?*
And what is truth? And who did make the stars?
. . . . . .
I have to pay for fifty thousand hates,
Greeds, cruelties; such barbarous tortured days
A tiger would disdain; — for all my kind!
Not my one mother, not my own of kin, —
All, all, who wear the motley in the heart
Or on the body: — for all cagèd glories
And trodden wings, and sorrows laughed to scorn.
I, — I! — At last.

VERONIKA. Ah, me! How can I say:
Yet make them happier than they let you be?

PIPER. Woman, you could! — They know not how to be
Happy! They turn to darkness and to grief
All that is made for joy. They deal with men
As, far across the mountains, in the south,
Men trap a singing thrush, put out his eyes, —
And cage him up and bid him then to sing —
Sing before God that made him, — yes, to sing!
. . . . . .
I *save* the children. — Yes, I save them, so,
Save them forever, who shall save the world! —
Yes, even Hamelin. —
But for only *you,*
What do they know of Children? — Pfui? *their own!*
Who knows a treasure, when it is his own?
Do they not whine: "*Five mouths around the table;*
And a poor harvest. And now comes one more!
God chastens us!" — Pfui —

VERONIKA [*apart, dully*]. . . . But I must be patient.

PIPER. You know, you know, that not one dared, save you, —
Dared all alone, to search this devil's haunt.

VERONIKA. They would have died —

PIPER. But never risked their *souls!*
That knew I also.

VERONIKA. Ah!

PIPER. "Young faces," sooth,
The old ones prate of! — Bah, what is 't they want?
"Some one to work for me, when I am old;
Some one to follow me unto my grave;
Some one — for me!" Yes, yes. There is not one
Old huddler-by-the-fire would shift his seat
To a cold corner, if it might bring back
All of the Children in one shower of light!

VERONIKA. The old, ah, yes! But not —

PIPER. The younger men?
Aha! Their pride to keep the name alive;
The name, the name, the little Hamelin name,
Tied to the trade; — carved plain upon his gravestone!
Wonderful! If your name must chain you, live,
To your gaol of a house, your trade you hate — why then,
Best go without a name, like me! — How now?
Woman, — you suffer?

VERONIKA. Ah, yet could I laugh,
Piper, yet could I laugh, for one true word, —
But not of all men.

PIPER. Then of whom?
VERONIKA. Of Kurt.
PIPER. Bah, Kurt the Councillor! a man to curse.
VERONIKA. He is my husband.
PIPER [*shortly*]. Thine? I knew it not.
Thine? But it cannot be. He could not father
That little Jan, — that little shipwrecked Star.
VERONIKA. Oh, then you love him? You will give him back?
PIPER. The son of Kurt?
VERONIKA. No, not *his* son! No, no.
He is all mine, all mine. Kurt's sons are straight,
And ruddy, like Kurt's wife of Hamelin there,
Who died before.
PIPER. And you were wed . . .
VERONIKA. So young,
It is all like some dream before the sunrise,
That left me but that little shipwrecked Star.
PIPER. Why did you marry Kurt the Councillor?
VERONIKA [*humbly*]. He wanted me. Once I was beautiful.
PIPER [*wonderingly*]. What, more than now?
VERONIKA. Mock if you will.
PIPER. I mock you!
O Woman, . . . you are very beautiful.
VERONIKA. I meant, with my poor self, to buy him house
And warmth, and softness for his little feet.
Oh, then I knew not, — when we sell our hearts,
We buy us nothing.
PIPER. Now you know.
VERONIKA. I know.
His dearest home it was, to keep my heart
Alone and beautiful, and clear and still;
And to keep all the gladness in my heart,
That bubbled from nowhere! — for him to drink; —
And to be houseless of all other things,
Even as the Lonely Man.
[*The* PIPER *starts.*]
Where is the child?
PIPER. No; that I will not tell. Only thus much:
I love thy child. Trust me, — I love them, all.
They are the brightest miracle I know.
Wherever I go, I search the eyes of men
To find such clearness; — and it is not there.
Lies, greed and cruelty, and dreadful dark!
And all that makes Him sad these thousand years,
And keeps His forehead bleeding, — Ah, you know?
VERONIKA. Whom do you think on?
PIPER. Why, the Lonely Man. —
But now I have the children safe with me;
And men shall never teach them what men know; —
Those radiant things that have no wish at all
Save for what is all-beautiful! — the Rainbow,
The Running Water, and the Moon, the Moon!
The only things worth having!
VERONIKA. — Oh, you will not
Give him to me?
PIPER. How give you yours again,
And not the others? What a life for him!
[*She hides her face.*]
And Kurt the Syndic, left without his sons?
Bah, do not dream of it! What would Kurt do? —
And hearken here! Should any hunt me down,
Take care. Who then could bring the children back?
VERONIKA. *Jan! Jan!*
PIPER. He loves me. He is happy.
VERONIKA [*passionately*]. *No!*
Without me? — No.
PIPER. He has not even once
Called you.
VERONIKA [*staggering*]. Ah, ah! . . .
The spell. —
PIPER [*startled*]. Nay, now; — rise up now, foreign woman.
Would you not have him cheered?
VERONIKA. — O far-off God!
PIPER [*offering her water*]. Drink here. Take heart. O Woman, they must stay!
'T is better so. No, no, I mock thee not.
Thou foldest all about me like the Dark

That holds the stars. I would I were thy child.

VERONIKA. But I will find him. I will find him —

PIPER. No,

It must not be! Their life is bound with mine.

If I be harmed, they perish. Keep that word.

Go, go!

VERONIKA [*passionately*]. My longing will bring back my Own.

PIPER. Ah, long not so.

VERONIKA. Yes, it will bring him back!

He breathes. And I will wish him home to me,

Till my heart break!

PIPER. Hearts never break in Hamelin.

Go, then; and teach those other ones to long;

Wake up those dead!

VERONIKA. Peace. I shall draw him home.

PIPER. Not till he cries for thee.

VERONIKA. Oh, that will be

Soon, — soon.

PIPER [*gently*]. Remember, — if one word of thine

Set on the hounds to track me down and slay me,

They would be lost forever; they would die, —

They, who are in my keeping.

VERONIKA. Yea, I hear.

But he will come . . . oh, he will come to me,

Soon, — soon.

[*She goes, haltingly, and disappears along the road to Hamelin. — The* PIPER, *alone, stands spell-bound, breathing hard, and looking after her. Then he turns his head and comes down, doggedly. Again he pauses. With a sudden sharp effort he turns, and crosses with passionate appeal to the shrine, his arm uplifted towards the carven Christ as if he warded off some accusation. His speech comes in a torrent.*]

PIPER. I will not, no, I will not, Lonely Man!

I have them in my hand. I have them all — All — all! And I have lived unto this day.

You understand . . .

[*He waits as if for some reply.*]

You know what men they are.

And what have they to do with such as these?

Think of those old as death, in body and heart,

Hugging their wretched hoardings, in cold fear

Of moth and rust! — While these miraculous ones,

Like golden creatures made of sunset-cloud,

Go out forever, — every day, fade by

With music and wild stars! — Ah, but You know.

The hermit told me once, You loved them, too.

But I know more than he, how You must love them:

Their laughter, and their bubbling, skylark words

To cool Your heart. Oh, listen, Lonely Man! —

. . . . . .

Oh, let me keep them! I will bring them to You,

Still nights, and breathless mornings; they shall touch

Your hands and feet with all their swarming hands,

Like showering petals warm on furrowed ground, —

All sweetness! They will make Thee whole again,

With love. Thou wilt look up and smile on us!

. . . . . .

Why not? I know — the half — You will be saying.

You will be thinking of Your Mother. — Ah,

But she was different. She was not as they.

She was more like . . . this one, the wife of Kurt!

Of Kurt! No, no; ask me not this, not this!

Here is some dawn of day for Hamelin, — now!

'T is hearts of men You want. —

Not greed and carven tombs, not misers' candles;

No offerings, more, from men that feed on men;
Eternal psalms and endless cruelties! . . .
Even from now, there may be hearts in Hamelin,
Once stabbed awake!
[*He pleads, defends, excuses passionately; before his will gives way, as the arrow flies from the bow-string.*]
— *I will not give them back!*
And Jan, — for Jan, that little one, that dearest
To Thee, and me, hark, — he is wonderful.
Ask it not of me. Thou dost know I cannot!
. . . . . .
Look, Lonely Man! You shall have all of us
To wander the world over, where You stand
At all the crossways, and on lonely hills, —
Outside the churches, where the lost ones go! —
And the wayfaring men, and thieves and wolves
And lonely creatures, and the ones that sing!
We will show all men what we hear and see;
And we will make Thee lift Thy head, and smile.
. . . . . .
No, no, I cannot give them all! No, no. —
Why wilt Thou ask it? — Let me keep but one.
No, no, I will not. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . *Have Thy way, — I will!*

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE. *Hamelin market-place. It is early morning; so dark that only a bleak twilight glimmers in the square; the little streets are dim. Everywhere gloom and stillness. In the house of* KURT, *beside the Minster, there is one window-light behind a curtain in the second story. At the casements, down right and left, sit* OLD CLAUS *and* OLD URSULA, *wan and motionless as the dead. The church-bell, which likewise seems to have aged, croaks softly, twice.* PETER *the Sacristan stands by the bell-rope.*

OLD URSULA. No, no. They'll never come. I told ye so.
They all are gone. There will be nothing young
To follow us to the grave.
OLD CLAUS. No, no, — not one!

[*The Minster-door opens, and out come certain of the townsfolk from early mass. They look unnaturally old and colorless. Their steps lag drearily.* — HANS *the Butcher and his wife;* AXEL *the Smith with his wife, and* PETER *the Cobbler, meet, on their way to the little street, left, and greet one another with painstaking, stricken kindness. They speak in broken voices.*]

HANS *the Butcher.* Well, well —
AXEL *the Smith.* God knows!
[*The bell sounds.*]
HANS *the Butcher.* Neighbor, how fare your knees?
[AXEL *smooths his right leg and gives a jerk of pain. They all move stiffly.*]
AXEL *the Smith.* I'm a changed man.
HANS *the Butcher.* Peter the Sacristan,
Give by the bell! It tolls like — Oh, well, well!
AXEL *the Smith.* It does no good, it does no good at all.
PETER *the Cobbler.* Rather, I do believe it mads the demons;
And I have given much thought —
AXEL *the Smith.* Over thy shoes!
PETER *the Cobbler* [*modestly.*] To demons.
AXEL'S WIFE. Let him chirp philosophy!
He had no children.
PETER *the Cobbler* [*wagging his head solemnly*]. I'm an altered man.
Now were we not proceeding soberly,
Singing a godly hymn, and all in tune,
But yesterday, when we passed by —
HANS' WIFE. Don't say it!
Don't name the curseful place.
HANS *the Butcher.* — And my poor head,
It goes round yet; — around, around, around,
As I were new ashore from the high seas;
Still dancing — dancing —
AXEL *the Smith.* Neighbor, say no more.

HANS *the Butcher*. Even as ye heard, the farmer's yokel found me
Clasping a tree, and praying to stand still!
AXEL *the Smith*. Ay, ay, — but that is nought.
PETER *the Cobbler*. All nought beside.
HANS' WIFE. Better we had the rats and mice again,
Though they did eat us homeless, — if we might
All starve together! — Oh, my Hans, my Hans!
PETER *the Cobbler*. Hope not, good souls. Rest sure, they will not come.
AXEL'S WIFE. Who will say that?
PETER *the Cobbler* [*discreetly*]. Not I; but the Inscription.
[*He points to the Rathaus wall.*]
AXEL *the Smith*. Of our own making?
PETER *the Cobbler*. On the Rathaus wall!
At our own bidding it was made and graved: —
How, — on that day and down this very street,
He led them, — he, the Wonderfully-clothed,
The Strange Man, with his piping;
[*They cross themselves.*]
And they went, —
And never came again.
HANS' WIFE. But they may come!
PETER *the Cobbler* [*pityingly*]. Marble is final, woman; — nay, poor soul!
When once a man be buried, and over him
The stone doth say *Hic Jacet*, or Here Lies,
When did that man get up? — There is the stone.
They come no more, for piping or for prayer;
Until the trump of the Lord Gabriel.
And if they came, 't is not in Hamelin men
To alter any stone, so graven. — Marble
Is final. Marble has the last word, ever.
[*Groans from the burghers.*]
HANS *the Butcher*. O little Ilse! — Oh! and Lump — poor Lump!
More than a dog could bear! — More than a dog —
[*They all break down. The Shoemaker consoles them.*]
PETER *the Cobbler*. Bear up, sweet neighbors. — We are all but dust.
No mice, no children. — Hem! And now Jacobus, —
His child, not even safe with Holy Church,
But lost and God knows where!
AXEL'S WIFE. Bewitched, — bewitched!
[HANS *and his wife, arm in arm, turn left, towards their house, peering ahead.*]
HANS' WIFE. Kind saints! Me out and gone to early mass,
And all this mortal church-time, there's a candle,
A candle burning in the casement there; —
Thou wasteful man!
HANS *the Butcher* [*huskily*]. Come, come! do not be chiding.
Suppose they came and could not see their way.
Suppose — O wife! — I thought they'd love the light!
I thought —
PETER *the Cobbler*. Ay, now! And there's another light
In Kurt the Syndic's house.
[*They turn and look up. Other burghers join the group. All walk lamely and look the picture of wretchedness.*]
AXEL'S WIFE. His wife, poor thing,
The priest is with her. Ay, for once, they say,
Kurt's bark is broken.
OLD URSULA. There will be nothing young
To follow us to the grave.
AXEL'S WIFE. They tell, she seems
Sore stricken since the day that she was lost,
Lost, searching on the mountain. Since that time,
She will be saying nought. She stares and smiles.
HANS' WIFE. And reaches out her arms, — poor soul!
ALL. Poor soul!
[*Murmur in the distance. They do not heed it.*]
AXEL *the Smith* [*To the Butcher*]. That was no foolish thought of thine, yon candle,
I do remember now as I look back,
They always loved the lights. My Rudi there

Would aye be meddling with my tinder-box.
And once I — Oh! [*Choking.*]
AXEL'S WIFE [*soothingly*]. Now, now! thou didst not hurt him!
'T was I! Oh, once — I shut him in the dark!
AXEL *the Smith.* Come home . . . and light the candles.
PETER *the Cobbler.* In the day-time!
AXEL'S WIFE. Oh, it is dark enough!
AXEL *the Smith.* Lord knows, who made
Both night and day, one of 'em needs to shine!
But nothing does! — Nothing is daylight now.
Come, wife, we'll light the candles.
[*Exit with his wife.*]
PETER *the Cobbler.* He's a changed man.
PETER *the Sacristan.* God help us, what's to do?
[*Tumult approaching. Shouts of "*JACOBUS*" and "*BARBARA.*"]
Hark!
HANS' WIFE. Neighbors!
HANS *the Butcher.* Hark! Hark!
[AXEL *and his wife reënter hastily;* AXEL *rushes towards the noise.*]
AXEL'S WIFE. Oh, I hear something! Can it be —
PETER *the Cobbler.* They're shouting.
HANS *the Butcher.* My lambs, — my lambs!
[AXEL *reënters, crestfallen.*]
AXEL *the Smith.* 'T is naught — but Barbara!
His — his!
[*Shaking his fist at the house of* JACOBUS.]
PETER *the Smith* [*calling*]. Jacobus!
[*The others are stricken with disappointment.*]
HANS *the Butcher.* Wife, — 't is none of ours.
AXEL *the Smith.* Let him snore on! — The only man would rather
Sleep late than meet his only child again!
PETER *the Cobbler* [*deprecatingly*]. No man may parley with the gifts of Fortune! [*Knocking on the door.*]
Jacobus!

[*Enter, at the rear, with a straggling crowd,* BARBARA *and* MICHAEL, *both radiant and resolute. She wears the long green cloak over her bridal array.* JACOBUS *appears in his doorway, nightcapped and fur-gowned, shrinking from the hostile crowd. The people murmur.*]

CROWD. Barbara! — She that was bewitched!
And who's the man? Is it the Piper? No!
No, no — some stranger. Barbara! Barbara's home; —
He never gave her up! — Who is the man?

JACOBUS. My daughter! 'T is my daughter, — found — restored!
Oh, heaven is with us!
ALL [*sullenly*]. Ah!
JACOBUS. Child, where have you been?
ALL. Ay, where, Jacobus?
[*He is dismayed.*]
JACOBUS. Who is this man? — Come hither.
BARBARA [*without approaching him, lifting her face clearly*]. Good-morning to you, father! We are wed.
Michael, — shall I go hither?
[*The townsfolk are amazed.*]
JACOBUS. She is mad!
She is quite mad, — my treasure.
PETER *the Cobbler.* Let her speak.
Maids sometimes marry, even in Hamelin.

ALL. Ay, tell us!
Who is he? Barbara?
Art thou mad? — How came ye hither?

JACOBUS. Who is he?
BARBARA. Michael.
PETER *the Cobbler.* 'T is the Sword-Eater!
A friend o' the Piper's! — Hearken —
ALL. She's bewitched!
HANS' WIFE. This is the girl was vowed to Holy Church,
For us and for our children that are lost!
BARBARA. Ay, and did any have a mind to me,
When I was lost? Left dancing, and distraught?

ALL. We could not. We were spell-bound. Nay, we could not.
JACOBUS [*sagely, after the others*]. We could not.
BARBARA. So! — But there was one who could.
There was one man. And this is he.
[*Turning to* MICHAEL.]
And I,
I am no more your Barbara, — I am his.
And I will go with him, over the world.
I come to say farewell.
JACOBUS. He hath bewitched her!
MICHAEL. Why did we ever come? Poor darling one,
Thy too-much duty hath us in a trap!
AXEL *the Smith*. No, no! — Fair play!
OTHERS. Don't let them go! We have them.
PETER *the Cobbler*. Hold what ye have. Be 't children, rats or mice!
[*Hubbub without, and shouts. Some of the burghers hasten out after this fresh excitement.* JACOBUS *is cowed.* BARBARA *and* MICHAEL *are startled. The shouts turn savage. The uproar grows. Shouts of "Ay, there he is! We have him! We have him! Help — help! Hold fast! Ah! Piper! Piper! Piper!"*]
How now? What all! —
[*The crowd parts to admit the* PIPER, *haled hither with shouts and pelting, by* MARTIN *the Watch and other men, all breathless. His eyes burn.*]
MICHAEL [*apart*]. Save us! — They have him.
MARTIN [*gaspingly*]. Help!
Mark ye — I caught him! — Help, and hold him fast!
PIPER. I came here, — frog!
MARTIN. Ay, he were coming on;
And after him a squirrel, hopping close!
SECOND MAN. As no man ever saw a squirrel hop —
Near any man from Hamelin! And I looked —
MARTIN. And it was he; and all we rush upon him —
And take him!
PIPER. Loose thy claws, I tell thee! —
ALL. 'Ware! / Mercy! / Let him go!
[*Their cries turn into an uproar of rage and desperation. They surge and fall back between fury and fear.* HANS *the Butcher, broken with hope, cries, "Loose him! Let him speak!" — The* PIPER *shakes himself free. — He sees* BARBARA *and* MICHAEL *for the first time and recoils with amazement.* BARBARA *steps towards him. — It is to be understood in the following pages, where the crowd speaks, that only a general consensus of meaning comes out of the uproar.*]
BARBARA. Oh, let him go, — let be. His heart is clear,
As water from the well!
[*The* PIPER *gazes at her, open-mouthed.*]
ALL. She talks in her sleep! / The maid's bewitched! / Now, will ye hear?
AXEL'S WIFE. He piped and made thee dance!
PETER *the Cobbler*. 'T was he bewitched us!
AXEL. He piped away our children and our lives!
OLD URSULA. I told ye so! — ay, ay!
OLD CLAUS. I told ye so!
BARBARA. He piped; — and all ye danced and fled away!
He piped; — and brought me back my wandering wits,
And gave me safe unto my Love again, —
My Love I had forgotten. . . .
PIPER. So!
MICHAEL [*with conviction*]. Truly said.
BARBARA [*proudly*]. Michael.
JACOBUS. Who is he, pray?
BARBARA. My own true love.
PETER *the Cobbler*. Now, is that all his name?
BARBARA. It is enough.
JACOBUS. — She's mad. Shall these things be?

ALL. *The Children! The Children!*
Where are the Children?
Piper! Piper! Piper!

PIPER [*sternly*]. Quiet you. And hear me.
I came to bring good tidings. In good faith,
Of mine own will, I came. — And like a thief
You haled me hither. —
[*They hang upon his words.*]
. . . Your children — live.

ALL. Thank God! I knew, I knew!
We could not think them lost.
Bewitched! Oh, but they live! —
Piper! — O Piper!

PETER *the Cobbler*. They're spell-bound, — mark me!

PIPER. Ay, they are, — spell-bound:
Fast bound by all the hardness of your hearts;
Caged, — in the iron of your money-lust —

ALL. No, no, not all! Not I! Not mine, not mine!
No, no, — it is not true.

PIPER. Your blasphemies, — your cunning and your Fear,

ALL. No, no! — What can we do?
News, Piper, news!
— The Children!

PIPER. Now hear me. You did make Jacobus swear
To give his child. — What recks it, how he lose her? —
Either to Holy Church — *against her will!*
Or to this man, — so that he give her up!
He swore to you. And she hath pledged her faith.
She is fast wed. — Jacobus shall not have her.
He breaks all bargains; and for such as he,
You suffer. — Will you bear it?

ALL. No, no, no!

PIPER. Then she who was "Proud Barbara" doth wed
Michael-the-Sword-Eater. — The pledge shall stand.
Shall it?

ALL. It stands.
Ay, ay!

PIPER. Your word!

ALL. We swear. We answer for him.
So much for Jacobus!

AXEL *the Smith*. An' if yon fellow like an honest trade,
I'll take him! — I'll make swords!
[*Cheers.* MICHAEL *is happy.*]

ALL. Quick, quick! — Our children. — Piper! — Tell us all!

PIPER. 'T is well begun. — Now have I come to say:
There is one child I may bring back to you, —
The first.

ALL [*in an uproar*]. Mine — mine! Let it be mine!
Ours! — All of them! Now!
Mine — mine — mine! — mine!

PIPER [*unmoved*]. — Oh, Hamelin to the end!
Which of you longed the most, and dared the most?
Which of you —
[*He searches the crowd anxiously with his eyes.*]

ALL. I! I! I!
We searched the hills!
We prayed four days!
We fasted twenty hours —
Mine! Mine!
Mine — mine — mine — mine!

PIPER. Not yet. — They all do live
Under a spell, — deep in a hollow hill.
They sleep, and wake; and lead a charmèd life.
But first of all, — one child shall come again. [*He scans the crowd still.*]
Where is the wife — of Kurt, the Councillor?

ALL [*savagely*]. *No, mine, mine, mine!*

MARTIN'S WIFE. What, that lame boy of hers?

PIPER. Where is the wife of Kurt?

PETER *the Cobbler and* OTHERS. — Veronika?
The foreign woman? She is lying ill:
Sore-stricken yonder —
[*Pointing to the house.*]

PIPER [*gladly*]. Bid her come, look out!
[*The crowd moves confusedly towards* KURT'S *house. The* PIPER *too approaches, calling.*]
Ho, — ho, within there!

[ANSELM, *the priest, appears in the doorway with uplifted hand, commanding silence. He is pale and stern. At sight of his face the* PIPER *falters.*]

ANSELM. Silence here! — Good people,
What means this?
PIPER. I have tidings for — the wife
Of Kurt — the Councillor.
ANSELM. You are too late.
PIPER. Bid her — look out!
ANSELM [*solemnly*]. Her soul is passing, now.
[*The* PIPER *falls back stricken and speechless. — The crowd, seeing him humanly overwhelmed, grows brave.*]
MARTIN'S WIFE. 'T is he has done it!
HANS *the Butcher.* — Nay, it is God's will.
Poor soul!
PETER *the Sacristan* [*fearfully*]. Don't anger him! 'T was Kurt the Syndic
With his bad bargain.
AXEL *the Smith.* Do not cross the Piper!
MARTIN. Nay, but he's spent. He's nought to fear. — Look there.
Mark now he breathes! Upon him! Help, help, ho! —
Thou piping knave!
OTHERS. Tie — chain him! — Kill him! Kill him!
[*They surround him. He thrusts them off.*]
PETER *the Cobbler and* OTHERS. Bind him, but do not kill him! — Oh, beware! What is he saying? — Peace.
PIPER [*brokenly*]. The wife of Kurt!
Off! what can you do? — Oh! I came, I came
Here, full of peace, and with a heart of love; —
To give — but now that one live Soul of all
Is gone! — No, no!
— *I say she shall not die!*
She shall not!
ANSELM. Hush! — She is in the hands of God.
She is at peace.
PIPER. No, never! Let me by!
[ANSELM *bars the threshold and steps out.*]
ANSELM. Thou froward fool! — Wouldst rend with tears again
That shriven breath? And drag her back to sorrow?
It is the will of God.
PIPER. — And I say No!
ANSELM. Who dare dispute —
PIPER. I dare!
ANSELM. With death? — With God?
PIPER. I know His will, for once! She shall not die.
She must come back, and live! — *Veronika!*
[*He calls up to the lighted window. The people stand aghast:* ANSELM *bars the threshold.*]
I come, I come! I bring your Own to you!
Listen, Veronika!
[*He feels for his pipe. It is gone. — His face shows dismay, for a moment.*]
Where? — Where?
PEOPLE. He's lost the pipe. — He's hiding it! — He cannot pipe them back! 't is gone — 't is gone. — No, 't is to save his life. It is for time.
PIPER [*to himself*]. — 'T is but a voice. What matter? —
CROWD. Seize him — Bind him!
PIPER [*to them*]. Hush!
[*Passionately he stretches his arms towards the window.*]
ANSELM. Peace, for this parting Soul!
PIPER [*with fixed eyes*]. *It shall not go.*
[*To the Window.*] Veronika! — Ah, listen! — wife of Kurt.
He comes . . . he comes! Open thine eyes a moment!
Blow the faint fire within thy heart. He comes!
Thy longing brings him; — ay, *and mine,— and mine!*
Heed not these grave-makers, Veronika.
Live, live, and laugh once more! — *Oh! do you hear?*
Look, how you have to waken all these dead,
That walk about you! — Open their dim eyes;
Sing to them with your heart, Veronika,

As I am piping, far away, outside!
Waken them, — change them! Show them how to long,
To reach their arms as you do, for the stars,
And fold them in. Stay but one moment; — stay,
And thine own Child shall draw thee back again
Down here, to mother him, — mother us all!
Oh, do you listen? — Do not try to answer. —
I hear! — I hear. . . .

[*A faint sound of piping comes from the distance. — The* PIPER *is first watchful, then radiant. — The burghers are awe-struck, as it sounds nearer.*]

BARBARA. Listen! —
MICHAEL. His very tune.

[*The* PIPER *faces front with fixed, triumphant eyes above the crowd.*]

MARTIN'S WIFE. O Lord, have mercy! —
The Pipe is coming to him, through the air!
ALL. 'T is coming to the Piper; — we are lost. —
The Pipe is coming, coming through the air!

[*The* PIPER, *with a sudden gesture, commands silence. He bounds away (centre), and disappears. The people, spell-bound with terror, murmur and pray.*]

ANSELM. *Retro me, Sathanas!*

[KURT *the Syndic appears on the threshold behind* ANSELM, *whose arm he touches, whispering. — Their faces are wonder-struck with hope and awe.*]

HANS *the Butcher* [*to the others, pointing*]. 'T is Kurt the Syndic.
AXEL *the Smith*. Then she lives! —
HANS' WIFE. Look there!
OTHERS. *Look, look! The casement! . . .*

[*The casement of the lighted window opens wide and slowly.*]

[*Reënter the* PIPER *with* JAN *in his arms. The little boy holds the Pipe, and smiles about with tranquil happiness. The* PIPER, *radiant with joy, lifts him high, looking towards* VERONIKA'S *window. — The awe-struck people point to the open casement.* VERONIKA'S *two white hands reach out; then she herself appears, pale, shining with ecstasy.*]

JAN. *'T is Mother!*

[*The* PIPER *lifts him still before the window, gazing up. Then he springs upon the bench (outside the lower window) and gives* JAN *into the arms of* VERONIKA. — KURT *and* ANSELM *bow their heads. A hush. — Then* JAN *looks down from the window-seat.*]

PIPER [*to him, smiling wisely*]. And all the others?
JAN. They were all asleep.
PIPER. I'll waken them!

[*He takes his pipe. — An uproar of joy among the burghers.*]

AXEL *the Smith*, HANS *the Butcher*, ALL. Bring lights, — bring lights! Oh, Piper — Oh, my lambs! — The children! — The children!

[*Some rush out madly; others go into their houses for lights; some are left on their knees, weeping for joy. The* PIPER *sounds a few notes; then lifts his hand and listens, smiling. — Uproar in the distance. — A great barking of dogs; — shouts and cheers; then the high, sweet voices of the* CHILDREN. *The piping is drowned in cries of joy. The sun comes out, still rosy, in a flood of light. The crowd rushes in. Fat burghers hug each other, and laugh and cry. They are all younger. Their faces bloom, as by a miracle. The* CHILDREN *pour in. Some are carried, some run hand-in-hand. Everywhere women embrace their own. —* KURT *has his sons. —* CHEAT-THE-DEVIL *comes, with a daisy-chain around his neck, all smiles. An uproar of light and faces.*]

HANS *the Butcher*. The treasure for the Piper!

ALL. Ay, ay, Piper!

HANS *the Butcher*. The thousand guilders!

PIPER. Give them Michael there,
For all us three. I hate to carry things; —
Saving out one!

[*He waves his hand to* JAN *in the window.* — VERONIKA *appears behind him, shining with new life.* JAN *leans out and points to the ground.*]

Héjà! What now? —

[*Picking up one of* JAN'S *winged shoes.*]

HANS' WIFE. Look! Look! —
And wings upon it! Mercy, what a shoe, —
Don't give it back. — The child will fly away

PIPER. No, no!

[*Looking up at the window soothingly.*]

He only wanted one to show —

JAN. To Mother! — See.

[*Showing her his other foot, joyously.*]

PIPER [*to him*]. And this, — wilt leave it here?
Here — with —

JAN. The Lonely Man! Oh, make Him smile!

[*The* PIPER *crosses to the Shrine, with the little shoe, and hangs it up there; then he turns towards the window, waving his hand.*]

CHILDREN. Where are you going? . . .

[*They run and cling.*]

PIPER. Ah, the high-road now!

CHILDREN. Oh! why?

PIPER. I have to find somebody there.
Yes, now and every day, and everywhere
The wide world over. — So: good-night, good-morning,
Good-by! There's so much piping left to do, —
I must be off, and pipe.

CHILDREN. Oh! why?

PIPER. I promised,
Look you! . . .

CHILDREN. Who is it?

PIPER. Why, — the Lonely Man

[*He waves them farewell, and goes. The* CHILDREN *dance and laugh and sparkle. Through the hundred sounds of joy, there comes a far-off piping.*]

THE END

THE YELLOW JACKET

A CHINESE PLAY DONE IN A CHINESE MANNER IN THREE ACTS

By GEORGE C. HAZELTON and BENRIMO

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TO

B.C.H. AND K.E.B.

FOREWORD

The purpose of the creators of this play is to string on a thread of universal philosophy, love and laughter the jade beads of Chinese theatrical convention. Their effort has been to reflect the spirit rather than the substance. To do this, the property man had to be overwrought; the Chorus had to be introduced. Signs usually indicate the scenes on the Oriental stage; the Chorus voices them for us.

While the story of THE YELLOW JACKET is not taken from any direct source, it is hoped that it may convey an imaginative suggestion of all sources and reflect the childhood of drama.

It might be said in a Chinese way that scenery is as big as your imagination.

Primitive people the world over begin to build their drama like the make-believe of children, and the closer they remain to the make-believe of children the more significant and convincing is the growth of their drama.

THE AUTHORS

TO THE POETS

To these you have restored their heritage:
To humor — loveliness; to undefiled
Passion — its splendor; to our native stage
Enchantment and the rapture of a child.

PERCY MACKAYE

CHARACTERS

Property man
Chorus
Wu Sin Yin (Great Sound Language), *Governor of the Province*
Due Jung Fah (Fuchsia Flower), *second wife of* Wu Sin Yin
Tso (Fancy Beauty), *maid to* Due Jung Fah
Chee Moo (Kind Mother), *first wife of* Wu Sin Yin
Tai Fah Min (Great Pained Face), *father of* Due Jung Fah
Assistant property men
Suey Sin Fah (Lily Flower), *wife of* Lee Sin *and maid of the first wife,* Chee Moo
Lee Sin (First Farmer)
Ling Won (Spirit)
Wu Fah Din (Daffodil)
Yin Suey Gong (Purveyor of Hearts)
Wu Hoo Git (Young Hero of the Wu Family), *destined for the Yellow Jacket*
See Quoe Fah (Four-Season Flower)
Mow Dan Fah (Peony).
Yong Soo Kow (Hydrangea)
Chow Wan (Au umn Cloud)
Moy Fah Loy (Plum Blossom), *daughter of* Tai Char Shoong
See Noi (Nurse), *in charge of* Plum Blossom
Tai Char Shoong (Purveyor of Tea to the Emperor)
The Widow Ching
Maid
Git Hok Gar (Philosopher and Scholar)
Kom Loi (Spider)
Loy Gong (God of Thunder)

THE YELLOW JACKET

ACT I

At the rise of the theater curtain blue silk draperies are disclosed, embroidered with gold dragons, forming a tableau curtain. These draperies are arranged to part in the center. When drawn, they hang in graceful folds on each side of the stage. The property man enters indifferently from the opening at center of curtain, strikes thrice on a gong and exits. The CHORUS, *then enters, bows right, left, and center. His costume is that of a rich Chinese scholar, the dominant note being red. His manner is most dignified. His actions are ceremonious.*

CHORUS. Most honorable neighbors, the bows, which I so humbly and solemnly divest myself of, are given in reverence to the three powers — Heaven — Earth — Man. I have been appointed by my humble brothers of the Pear Tree Garden to conduct you through a story of our celestial land to be played upon our most unworthy stage. Permit me to thank that vice of curiosity which beckoned you hither that we might paint before your august eyes our humble fancy. I bow. [*Bows three times.*]

Let me intrude a slight history of our most unworthy theater and the reason that we refer to our players as brothers of the Pear Tree Garden. A most curious tale — our beginning! It had its birth in the dynasty of the most wholesome one, the great Ming Wang. In reverence for so glorious a beginning we have kept our stage ever the same. For this antiquity, august and honorable, we ask indulgence. The good and honored Ming Wang, Son of Heaven and of glorious memory, was visited by an enchanted dream — full of strange beauty. In sleep he rambled over the moon. When the morning lifted his eyelids he wished his wife to behold the dream-painted beauties which had joyed his sleep. The Court, at his command, clothed in the glory of his dream, played the story of his moon-colored fancy beneath the pear trees of his summer palace-yard for her he loved. While I fill up time with many words, my brothers are burning costly incense before the God of the Theater who, they hope, will bountifully answer their prayer and make them worthy to win your approval. Much of our acting will be strange. Our play deals with mother's love, the love of youth, and the hate of men, which makes them do unhappy things. Spirits of those who once walked flowery or pestilent paths in this world will reach out their hands to sufferers in our history. We hope out of our imperfect efforts there may come to you some pleasure. I fear I have intruded too long upon your welcome and that you are in haste for my brothers to begin. They, too, are impatient, for the perfume of their sacrifice even now floats upon the august air.

Men will speak fair words with blackened minds. That you may not be carried away by their wiles, we have enmasked them with paint — red, white and black — that you may know them; but they will never know that you know that their souls are mirrored in their faces, for men look many times to see themselves, as they are pleased to see themselves. It is mostly so with villains. As prompter for my brothers, I will be ever before you to help you to an understanding of our doings. For so much kind patience as you have shown, I give you thanks and shall tell my brothers.

[*Bows three times.*]

Observe well with your eyes and listen well with your ears. Be as one family, exceedingly happy and content. Heaven has no mouth. It makes men speak for it.

[*Bells.*]

The gusts of Heaven breathe on the bells and they tinkle with joy on the eaves of the pagoda.

Ere departing my footsteps hence, let me impress upon you that my property man is to your eyes intensely invisible.

[*Property man now comes before curtain again. Strikes gong and exits.*]

I bow.

[*Claps his hands three times; curtains part, revealing a set in dull orange with green and gold trimmings. There are two doors, one stage left for entrance and one stage right for exit. In the center at the back is an oval opening surrounded by a grill, within which the musicians sit. Above this opening is another, square in form, which represents Heaven. About the walls of the scene are Chinese banners and signs of good cheer. Huge lanterns hang from above. At the left is a large property box, and above it are chairs, tables, cushions, etc., in fact all properties used in the play.* CHORUS *takes his seat up center. Music.*]

'T is the palace of Wu Sin Yin, the Great, a most unhappy man, for he possesses two wives. He comes, Wu Sin Yin, the Great.

[*The gong sounds and the cymbals crash; the curtain on door left is pulled aside.*]

[*Enter* WU SIN YIN. *He comes down stage, then walks to right, then to center, turns twice round, and seats himself. The property man assists him to arrange his costume, then smokes complacently.* WU SIN YIN *gazes solemnly before him; his whole action on entrance is consciously done to display his costume; when seated he spreads his legs and turns out his toes, displays his finger-nails on his left hand, two of which are very long, one being gilded and the other colored green; he fans himself; during this business the orchestra plays, the cymbals crash, the drum rolls and the wooden block is struck. The cymbals are struck also, when he mentions the name of the Emperor.*]

WU SIN YIN. I am the most important personage in this play. Therefore, I address you first. By your gracious leave, with many apologies, I will state in all modesty, for your edification only, for of course I know who I am and how great and august I am, while you are not so favored, that I am Wu Sin Yin, the Great. I have the third eye of wisdom here. I shape the destiny with my finger-tips of the people on the Yangtsekiang. [*Sits in great state fanned by attendant.*] I would bow to you, but it is beneath my dignity. My wives kotow to me in abject slavery, which is as it should be with wives. This is my sun-kissed palace on the purple hill. Here by seal and by the red pencil on a yellow silken banner, I hold my court and issue my edicts. Here the abject subjects of my province crawl to bring me the harvest of their labors, for it is decreed by the Son of Heaven, our Celestial Emperor, of the Eighth Dynasty [*rises and bows three times*], that they bring me the fruits of their slavish menial toil. With all this felicity of personal importance, I am still augustly unhappy, for I possess two wives — a first wife and a second wife. Chee Moo, the first wife, has a child crab-like and spider-formed. It was her mistake, not mine. I have a right divine to like or dislike my wives at pleasure. Happiness is necessary to a great governor in order that his menials may be happy by reflection, as I am in the presence of my second wife, Due Jung Fah, who shines in the light of my favor. I must, in august sympathy for my situation, delicately dispose of the first wife and crooked child — very delicately — for Chee Moo's family is powerful; and, if I beheaded her uncouthly, they might be annoyed. I must contrive a secret and respectful and courteous departure for her honorable soul. Then I may pass my hours in celestial bliss with Due Jung Fah, my beautiful second one. How shall I accomplish it? I am admonished of the approach of my honored

second father-in-law, Tai Fah Min, who is wisely virtuous and will advise me.

[*On exit curtain at right door is lifted and the orchestra plays until the curtain falls. The property man removes the chair and places it left among other properties.*]

CHORUS. 'T is the garden of Due Jung Fah, the second wife of Wu Sin Yin, the Great.

[*Enter* DUE JUNG FAH *followed by her maid,* TSO, *door left. Both hold their fans before their faces and walk with mincing steps to center, during music.* DUE JUNG FAH *keeps always a little in advance of* TSO.]

DUE JUNG FAH. Gentle listeners, here in my garden, with ceremonial bow, I tell you, I am Due Jung Fah, most unhappy of ladies. I am the second wife of Wu Sin Yin, the Great. There would be music in my heart if it were not for the first wife. The butterflies and bees and the humming-birds do not come to my garden. They fly to make hers beautiful. [*To* TSO.] Interrupt me not. The goldfish die in my lily ponds and swim sun-kissed in Chee Moo's across the wall. Where she walks with her monkey-faced child, the hyacinths bloom, the purple wistaria and the white jasmine fill the air with fragrance for her painted nostrils. I breathe and breathe, and the air is heavy with death of flowers. Oh, oh, even the lanterns in her evening walk brighten her path, while mine fade and I stumble. [*Stops* TSO, *who would speak.*] Tell me not. I marvel that any one should do her homage. My mind is crowded with thoughts of her cripple monster-child, for my soul has not given forth a child-seed. The air is filled with the approach of some one. Let us depart.

[*As* DUE JUNG FAH *exits door right, music.*]

TSO. [*Returns to center.*] No one comes. The opportunity was not permitted me to tell you truly that I am Tso, the maid of Due Jung Fah. When I met you my mistress wanted to unburden her august soul to you. Though I was filled with sky words, I am too adroit to talk when she wishes to. I am the dust in the sunbeam. I am one of the darkest shadows of our play. It is the modest little maid whose manner is filled with sunlight that throws the prettiest little shadows of the dark. Innocence makes the best play-shadow. The night shadow has no danger, for you see it as you pass. Sweet little flitting shadows like mine trip you in your path. I threw a tiny rainbow shadow across Due Jung Fah's eyes which looked like the first wife in her richest jewels and prettiest gown; and then a big thunder-cloud shadow across the eyes of Wu Sin Yin, and the cloud took on the image of his twisted child. If Chee Moo is gently disposed of, Due Jung Fah becomes the first wife and I become the first maid. The first maid, Suey Sin Fah, faints at the incense of some flowers. Lee Sin, her husband, deserves a wife more brave. Why not a gentle little shadow? [*Exits. Music.*]

CHORUS. 'T is a road leading to the palace of Wu Sin Yin, the Great. He comes, Tai Fah Min! mounted on his milk-white steed!

[*Loud crash of cymbals; curtain on door left is lifted and* TAI FAH MIN *enters followed by two men; he carries a whip and does pantomime of riding and driving a horse; one of the men who follow him carries a banner inscribed with Chinese characters; this banner is red; the other carries a large fan on a stick; he comes down to left, then crosses right, then to center; goes through business of dismounting his horse, throwing his leg high in the air; the property man assists him and helps his man hold his supposed horse; he lays his whip on the ground behind him; during all this, music. The supernumeraries retire up stage with supposed horse.* TAI FAH MIN *pivots on one foot, takes out his fan, which is carried at the back of his neck, and bows three times to the audience. Gongs.*]

TAI FAH MIN. My horse! Remove him!

He must not hear the secret thoughts of his master. Tai Fah Min is my name. I come from the Southland, where the sun kisses the hilltops. I rule a province there as rich as the one of him I come to visit. I bow to you [*bows three times*], risking my dignity in doing so. A father's love hastens me hither, for I am the parent of the most wretched of ladies, the second wife of the celestial governor of this province, Wu Sin Yin, the Great. Chee Moo, the first wife, and her monster-born child stand between my beautiful daughter, Due Jung Fah, and her husband. No one will envy her dead. Whatever pathway a father finds to give happiness to a daughter is not offensive to the gods. This province is too crowded with august wives, and the honorable Chee Moo, the first wife, and her dragon-eyed child, should be generous to others who need the celestial air they breathe. Due Jung Fah, my daughter, will then be all and I will be all. This is the road to the palace. [*To attendants.*] Bring back my sublime horse! Attend me on foot.

[*Property man brings forward the supposed horse and he goes through the pantomime of mounting; they assist him, property man picks up whip and hands it to him; he beats the supposed horse. Exit* Tai Fah Min *and attendants; door right. The property man now places a table center, which he carries from left, places a red cover on it; then two chairs on either side, which he also covers with a red cloth, and puts a small stool on each.*]

Chorus. 'T is a room in the palace of Wu Sin Yin, the Great.

[*Enter door left,* Wu Sin Yin. *Attended by a man with a fan, he seats himself in chair right of table; his dress is arranged as before by property man, etc.; during this, music. Enter attendant with* Tai Fah Min's *card and kneels. After* Wu Sin Yin *is seated, enter* Tai Fah Min, *attended by a man with a fan.* Wu Sin Yin *rises, pivots on right foot once, then clasps his hands, opens his fan, which he takes from back of neck, and seats himself.* Tai Fah Min *does the same business and seats himself left of table.*]

Wu Sin Yin. Tai Fah Min, my exalted second father-in-law, I receive you into my palace and presence with exuberance of fancy. My beloved second father-in-law may assume that Wu Sin Yin, the Great, has bowed to him with filial obeisance.

Tai Fah Min. And my celestial son-in-law may felicitate himself with the glorious fancy that his second father-in-law also has bowed. The palace of the great Wu Sin Yin breathes incense of happiness. The gods smiled and it rose like a flower from the earth for the habitation of our master. The teak-wood was carved by moon-rays dancing on its surface, the rugs were woven by humming-bird beaks as they played hide-and-seek with their love-mates among the silken threads on the loom. The gods—

Wu Sin Yin. Ah, Tai Fah Min, my Tai Fah Min, you exaggerate the magnificence of my palace by compliments of great length. It is most humble. The beauties of my mind are enmeshed by the threads of evil woven there by the spider's art, else why should I, Wu Sin Yin, the Great, be the most unhappy of men?

[*Property man here comes forward with tray on which are two cups; he places them on the table.*]

Tai Fah Min. The most radiantly happy!

Wu Sin Yin. Ah, if your daughter were only my first wife — *not* my second, my Tai Fah Min.

Tai Fah Min. My daughter dare not look so high. She has not yet reached that great state — motherhood.

Wu Sin Yin. I must have advice that brings unclouded to my arms and lips, the rosy lotus lips and arms of Due Jung Fah. Advise me my way, Tai Fah Min.

Tai Fah Min. My brain speaks, but my heart stands still.

Wu Sin Yin. Who could guide me better than my second father-in-law, who has such interest in my affairs?

Tai Fah Min [*anxiously*]. I speak. The

first wife, Chee Moo, stands in the hate of your subjects, because the child she bore was cramped, crab-like, monstrous and unwise in its likenesses of evil. The devils damned it at its birth with — the monstrosities of the —

WU SIN YIN [*interrupting*]. Mother's soul. Forget not that.

TAI FAH MIN. That will save us with your subjects. If it had inherited the noble godlike spirit of the father, Wu Sin Yin, the common hordes would have demanded it for the next ruler. They dare to loathe the fruits of your body. Your scholars would advise as I do, Wu Sin Yin.

WU SIN YIN. And that is —

TAI FAH MIN. Hush! Let us pass into another room where none may listen. [*They walk three times about the stage and stop each in the other's place. Property man changes chairs. Music.*] We are safer here in this isolated spot. This palatial room is more fragrant than that we have passed from.

WU SIN YIN. Use up no more air in compliment.

TAI FAH MIN. We must whisper. No matter how safe you hide the egg the chicken will hatch. A sweet passing heavenward for the first mother and the child.

WU SIN YIN [*gleefully*]. And Due Jung Fah will come to me with no shadows between us. But my conscience constrains me.

TAI FAH MIN [*soothingly*]. Think on the gorgeous munificence of her funeral! To die the wife of Wu Sin Yin, the Great, is like breathing zephyrs of the South as against living in a typhoon. Think how proud her family should be of the ceremonies as we lay the first wife with her ancestors! Her death will be most glorious.

WU SIN YIN. Can we make her family believe it?

TAI FAH MIN. It would be deplorably bad taste if her family did not appreciate the magnificence of the funeral that your dignity will afford her.

WU SIN YIN. A blind cat catches only a dead rat. Have I among my servants one in dignity becoming to do the deed, for we could not leave it to the public executioner?

TAI FAH MIN. Lee Sin, the farmer, — worthy, god-favored and properly menial.

WU SIN YIN [*thoughtfully*]. This farmer is strong.

TAI FAH MIN. He will gently plough a furrow with his sword in Chee Moo's neck and the gods will smile upon such husbandry.

WU SIN YIN. Send for him!

[*Enter* TSO *door left, with short strain of music.*]

TSO. Most august and greatest of men, representative of the Son of Heaven: I kneel, bow and ask that my mistress, Due Jung Fah, your devoted second wife, may speak with her august lord and husband.

WU SIN YIN [*condescendingly*]. My wife may speak to her husband-master.

[*Exit* TSO, *after bowing to both men.*]

TAI FAH MIN. See how humbly my daughter approaches you.

[*Enter* DUE JUNG FAH, *followed by* TSO; *kneels and bows to* WU SIN YIN; *music.*]

DUE JUNG FAH. Most wonderful and only husband in the world, of whom even as the second wife, I, Due Jung Fah, am most unworthy. [*Bows.*]

WU SIN YIN. Luscious one, I greet you. Rise and greet your worthy and far-seeing father, Tai Fah Min!

DUE JUNG FAH. I could not bow to my ancestors' tablets, much less to my noble father, before I had bowed my head in the dust three times to my gracious husband.

[DUE JUNG FAH *here kneels and bows to* TAI FAH MIN. *All rise and bow.*]

TAI FAH MIN. My daughter has the modesty that Confucius praises. Her voice is low and gentle. Gracious and celestial one, pardon the emotions of the greetings of a father in your presence.

WU SIN YIN. How would you fancy, my Due Jung Fah, as first wife, to languish unclouded in the lavish smiles of Wu Sin Yin, the Great?

DUE JUNG FAH. But Chee Moo, my sister, the glorious first wife, lives. [*Pretending to be startled, looking from one to the other.*] Not dead! I should faint of grief.

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TAI FAH MIN [*aside to her*]. Remember it is your duty to fill your husband's eyes with happiness and obedience, that wife-hood in you may be glorious to the end that such a child as Chee Moo bore shall not live to rule in the Flowery Kingdom. Wu Sin Yin and your father ask it.

DUE JUNG FAH. I love the province of the august Wu Sin Yin. Who does the deed?

TAI FAH MIN. Lee Sin, the farmer.

DUE JUNG FAH. I am resigned, if it cannot be done more gently with the dream-giving opiates.

WU SIN YIN. I had the flowers about her filled with the softest poison perfume that she might breathe their august exhalations and pass gently to the honorable and desirable land of dreams. I went as the morning broke to weep over her departed soul, but it was she who was in tears over the honorable departure of the bees and butterflies and humming-birds who for love of their mistress had sucked the poison honey of the flowers and laid themselves to rest for her they loved. Their selfishness in robbing their mistress of her eternal sleep was inexcusable.

DUE JUNG FAH. I will retire and pray seven days at the tablets of my ancestors for the soul of Chee Moo and her child.

WU SIN YIN. Your prayers shall cover but the space of one day.

DUE JUNG FAH. Wu Sin Yin, the Great! I dwell in the unhappiness of my sister-wife. Fan me!

[*Exit* DUE JUNG FAH *door right, after bowing three times, followed by* TSO. *Music.*]

WU SIN YIN. Send for the executioners. I shake hands with myself, Tai Fah Min, and leave you.

[WU SIN YIN *clasps his hands, bows, opens his fan and exits door right, followed by* TAI FAH MIN; *cymbal and gong. Property man now removes chairs and table.*]

CHORUS. 'T is the garden of Chee Moo, the unhappy first wife of Wu Sin Yin, the Great.

[*Enter* CHEE MOO *door left, with child, which is represented by a stick with pieces of cloth wrapped around it and hanging down. Comes down and crosses right. During following speech soft wails from orchestra.*]

CHEE MOO. Oh, woe is me! Murder is in the air. The evil spirits build walls about me whichever way I go. Now you know that I am Chee Moo and this the child, Woo Hu Git. The devils put toads in our path to croak and awake him that he might cry out and reveal us; bats in the air follow us by night and hang their great withered wings from the rafters of Heaven, like a dead forest, to impede us by day. My boy, my pretty boy! whom evil plotters call cripple and monster-formed but who, as you see, is celestially beautiful. Let your baby dreams be a silent prayer to your ancestors for help. I will cry out to them from a mother's heart for your protection. We will fly to the mountains, the place of the issuing clouds, where your mother will weave fabrics of silk to cradle you in and care for you until your baby arm can wield a sword to confound your enemies. The lantern of my love hangs in the temple of my mind, and I pray you, my ancestors, let no unkind wind spirit or water sprite quench the flame of my child-love.

[*Exits door right.*]

CHORUS. 'T is a courtyard in the palace of Wu Sin Yin, the Great.

[*Music. Enter* LEE SIN. *Comes down left, crosses right and bows.*]

LEE SIN. I am Lee Sin, the child of the rice fields. The chop-sticks of the poor and the chop-sticks of the rich await my harvest. I feed them as the golden pheasant feeds its young. Where I labor the god of the soil smiles on my ox and me, for we are sacred.

[*Bows; prostrates himself before* TAI FAH MIN, *who enters door left; loud crash on cymbals and gong.*]

TAI FAH MIN. Rise, Lee Sin, I would speak.

LEE SIN. Father of the second wife, I bring you greetings.

TAI FAH MIN. Son of the soil, I realize the dignity of your greetings.

LEE SIN. Wu Sin Yin bade me come. I left my ox to feed and dusted my feet and came.

TAI FAH MIN. You labor too hard. I would help you.

LEE SIN. If you took me from my labor you would rob me of the joy of living — which is my all.

TAI FAH MIN. Would you add to the gold in your purse, Lee Sin?

LEE SIN. An avaricious man is like a snake trying to swallow an elephant. I have enough — and that is all I need.

TAI FAH MIN. You have a wife who may think more wisely, Lee Sin.

LEE SIN. Suey Sin Fah is my wife, and maid to the beautiful Chee Moo, first wife of Wu Sin Yin, the Great. She, too, is happy and content, for she is good.

TAI FAH MIN. What do you love best in all the world, Lee Sin?

LEE SIN. My parents and my wife, the little Suey Sin Fah.

TAI FAH MIN. And have you no love for your master, Wu Sin Yin, the Great?

LEE SIN. I bow in the dust three times to him. He stands in the place for me of the Emperor, the Son of Heaven.

[*Gongs, both bowing.*]

TAI FAH MIN. You would not refuse then to do his bidding?

LEE SIN. To refuse would mean my death, and that I would give him for the asking.

TAI FAH MIN. And if he asks you to kill for him?

LEE SIN. He would not ask it.

TAI FAH MIN. [*Hands him death order, represented by tiger's head on a scroll.*] It is the command of the Son of Heaven.

[*Gongs and both bow.*]

LEE SIN. The tiger's head! What criminal name is penciled on the gaping mouth? My eyes are like swords danced upon by evil spirits. I cannot see. Chee Moo, my wife's dearest mistress, and the child! I cannot kill them. I will go to my ancestors first. [*Drops scroll.*]

TAI FAH MIN. Then Suey Sin Fah will go with you.

LEE SIN. Why does not the public executioner wreak his master's impatience on the head of Chee Moo? He is skilled in killing first wives.

TAI FAH MIN. It must be a quiet and merciful affair, otherwise it might become a scandal. Her family should congratulate her on the release of her suffering soul, for those beheaded or strangled are free from suffering, but wives' families are strangely inconsiderate.

LEE SIN. He that rids his house of an evil had better suffer the evil than tell the world.

TAI FAH MIN. I am going to Wu Sin Yin to drink delicious tea. Bring us the head of Chee Moo.

[*Exit* TAI FAH MIN *door right, fanning himself. Screeching sound played on instruments.*]

LEE SIN. The tiger's head! [*Picks up scroll.*] Ancestors, save me. An hour ago my ox and I were happy. The soft breeze on the rice fields brought us the music of Heaven. An instant, and the typhoon comes with a word, and the land is bleak, and death hovers where the sun-rays played. This is the evil moon wrought by man's mischief. He is not content and will not suffer his poorest neighbors to be content. The tiger's head! I must do the murder to save my wife, little Suey Sin Fah.

[*Enter* SUEY SIN FAH, *door left. Music. Comes down left, bows three times.*]

SUEY SIN FAH. May I be permitted to tell this august worthy audience — to whom I bow, for it is my business to be humble, — being both a maid and a wife, — for I am the maid of the august gracious Chee Moo, the first wife, and the wife of the god-loved farmer, Lee Sin.

LEE SIN [*back to her*]. And like to be the widow of that same Lee Sin, for the evil spirits encircle him.

SUEY SIN FAH. I pray my ancestors that I may not be maid and widow at one time. Your eyes roll. What demon spirits clutch your heart, my husband, Lee Sin? The veins in your forehead burst, your hands twitch with the wrenchings of the evil one.

[*Violent beating on gong and crash of cymbals.*]

LEE SIN. [*Shows her scroll.*] The tiger's head with a name upon its tongue.

SUEY SIN FAH. Not yours, Lee Sin, my love, not yours!

LEE SIN. Chee Moo! I must be her executioner.

SUEY SIN FAH. Chee Moo, my august mistress in the tiger's mouth! Let us die together and save Chee Moo and the boy, who are even now enchained prisoners within the walls of her flowery garden at the displeasure of her unkind husband.

LEE SIN. I cannot. The tiger! The mother dies by the sword; the child deserted in the wolf land.

SUEY SIN FAH. Is this the husband of my breast, is this distorted demon the one to whom I gave a wife-heart?

LEE SIN. I bow to the gods to tear all tender feelings from me that I may work myself into an unkindness to do Chee Moo's murder.

SUEY SIN FAH. I love the august Chee Moo and her beautiful child. She is suffering from the machinations of Due Jung Fah, who is the human spider in the world-box. We must save Chee Moo.

LEE SIN. If I obey not the mandate of Wu Sin Yin, the Great, your life and mine will answer for it.

SUEY SIN FAH. Death with our ancestors will be just as sweet in our love. The good of the people demands that Chee Moo live to raise her boy.

LEE SIN. But if I fail, Chee Moo will die the same by the hand of another found to do the work, as others will come to plough the rice fields when I and my ox are dead. Where is the honorable Chee Moo?

SUEY SIN FAH. Praying in her prison to the great-eyed god for the soul of her boy, Wu Hoo Git.

LEE SIN. What am I to do?

SUEY SIN FAH. Kill little Tso, and pass her off for the august Chee Moo.

LEE SIN [*suspiciously*]. You are jealous of little Tso.

SUEY SIN FAH. Tso is a fox and makes mischief for us all. She dreams black plots at night and whispers them in the willing ears of Due Jung Fah. The gods smile when a bad being is killed, for it is so rare. The good do the dying. That makes them good.

LEE SIN. But Tso does not look like Chee Moo. We should fail.

SUEY SIN FAH. [*Business.*] The sword that takes this from this — can slash this out of semblance. [*Business taking pin from her hair.*] Pin this in her hair. I took it from my mistress' head-dress. Where are you going?

LEE SIN. After my august sword.

[*Exeunt* LEE SIN *and* SUEY SIN FAH, *door right. Enter door left,* TSO. *Music.*]

TSO. A moonbeam fell where the murder was contrived. I know all, for I listened. I was behind it and heard Wu Sin Yin and Tai Fah Min plan it all. There must be moonbeams somewhere when great passions are working. If it had been a sunbeam there never could have been a murder.

[LEE SIN *enters, takes sword from property man.* TSO *does not see him at first. He stands and looks at her. She finally sees him and begins to flirt.*]

I knew you were here, Lee Sin.

LEE SIN. How could you know?

TSO. A butterfly lit on my heart and said, "Beware — there is a heart-thief here."

LEE SIN. The butterfly lied. I am married.

TSO. That is the whole trouble in the honorable august world. All the fascinating men are married.

LEE SIN. Work not your wiles on me, for I am rough, honest and not fascinating.

TSO. It is the honest husband that falls first, for he is foolish, and does n't know or does n't mean to, or does n't know that he wants to mean to. I pray my ancestors *not* to give me too honest a husband.

LEE SIN [*aside, as he crosses to right*]. She is the evil thing. Her fox soul should be released. I must do it.

TSO. You will find the honorable Chee Moo and her august monster-child yonder. The light from the jewel in the forehead of her god-image will fall upon the mortal spot and lead the sword.

LEE SIN. How knew you of my purpose?

Tso. A tortoise by the pool told me. He was so slow he overheard the plot in passing. Is your honorable sword very sharp?

Lee Sin. As sharp as the east wind.

Tso. Will you hack her one blow?

Lee Sin. No more.

Tso. How long will it take?

Lee Sin. The time it takes a lark to swallow a grasshopper. [Tso *shows glee.*]

Tso. Where will the sword cut? [*He walks up stage and shows her at neck. She shudders.*] Will it be very hard on your hands?

Lee Sin. It will be.

Tso. When will you do the deed?

Lee Sin. Now. [*Business.* Lee Sin *strikes at her neck with sword. Property man comes forward and holds a red flag before her face.*] I am blind with august blood. Where is the head? [*Property man throws a red sack on the stage.* Tso *exits door right.* Lee Sin *picks up red sack and talks to it.*] The remnant of a soul that lived! I will clip the ears. I will chop off the honorable nose. I will slit the precious eyes — that drooped to my humble eyes once. Without eyes, ears, lips and nose, you, as the first wife, Chee Moo, are as good as any.

Suey Sin Fah. [*Enters door left.*] Where is the head? Show me the head? Oh, woe is me; it is my august mistress, Chee Moo!

Lee Sin. The fox maid, little Tso!

Suey Sin Fah. It is Chee Moo, my mistress, Chee Moo!

Lee Sin. My sword worked the magic. I carved her to look like Chee Moo. There is the eye that drooped in love to your humble husband's.

Suey Sin Fah. She drooped her eye to you? I recognize it now. She should be dead! Look to your exalted sword! Ox-headed devils cling to its blade.

Lee Sin. The evil ones upon my blade mock her — not me, and they shall mock at Wu Sin Yin, for I shall present him with the sword together with her head. [Suey Sin Fah *pins jewel on the bag.*] Bid Chee Moo flee with her child.

[Suey Sin Fah *exits door right.*]

Lee Sin. The world is fire lined. To my work — I drag away the body, for without its head it is sweeter to fertilize a field of poppies.

[Lee Sin *goes through business of picking up supposed body and exits door right; music; property man now places table center, covered with red cloth; also chairs on either side, which are also covered with red cloth, with stools on their seats.*]

Chorus. 'T is the palace of Wu Sin Yin, the Great.

[*Enter* Wu Sin Yin, *door left; roll of drum; seats himself at right of table. Enter* Tai Fah Min, *takes seat on left of table; music stops. Property man brings tray on which are two cups and places the same on table.*]

Wu Sin Yin. Is it accomplished, my Tai Fah Min? Does your daughter sit in the coveted place she longed for?

Tai Fah Min [*complacently*]. Let us drink tea.

Wu Sin Yin. Bring tea, and cups of honeysuckle flowers and rose petals.

[*They drink.*]

Tai Fah Min. It is glorious when the bad die and the good live.

Wu Sin Yin. Glorious! A rose petal for my tea.

[*Property man pretends to deliver one with chop sticks.*]

[*Enter* Lee Sin *door left, kneels and bows three times to* Wu Sin Yin, *rises and puts basket which he has carried with him on table, laying his sword on top.*]

Lee Sin. Most celestial master, I fall upon my knees, for they hold me not. Her head has been removed and quietness reigns. In the basket, my honorable master. The august sword is there, too, most honorable master. Forget not the august sword.

Wu Sin Yin. [*Removes sword and peeks into basket.*] Burn perfumed incense as I peep at it. You have chopped off the lips that I have kissed!

Lee Sin. They lied, great master.

Wu Sin Yin. You have slit the eyes that have blinked to me!

LEE SIN. And to others, great master.

WU SIN YIN. You have chopped off the ears that have listened to my love!

LEE SIN. They have heard too much, great master.

TAI FAH MIN. Her head to the pigs! Another honeysuckle leaf for my tea!

WU SIN YIN. She *was* my first wife. I'll bury the trunk with august honor. Inform Due Jung Fah that I come. She need pray no longer. My arms ache for her, Tai Fah Min.

[*Music; exit* WU SIN YIN, *followed by* TAI FAH MIN, *door right.*]

LEE SIN [*with head*]. To the pigs! To the pigs with the head, but the demon sword for the girdle of Wu Sin Yin.

[*Exit* LEE SIN, *music, door right. Property man removes table and chairs, placing them on stage left. Music, plaintive theme.*]

CHEE MOO. [*Enters left with child, as before. Down center.*] To the mountains, where the evil eye grows blind in the pure air of Heaven.

[*Enter spirit,* LING WON, *with roll of drum at upper opening. Music.*]

LING WON. And the eye of Heaven sees all.

CHEE MOO. Who are you that floats upon a fleecy cloud? Are you an executioner who bears a sword?

LING WON. Fear not, I am the spirit of Wu Hoo Git's great-grandfather, the first Wu Hoo Git.

CHEE MOO. Then the breath of this child is your own life breeze, still playing on this earth. And this is the little Wu Hoo Git, who inherits your to-day and your to-morrow.

LING WON. As I inherit his yesterday and his yesterdays before it. I am the spirit self of his great-grandmother, too; we of yesterday are two in one.

CHEE MOO. How mean you?

LING WON. The land of the dead is so crowded that married souls become as one in space and the silkworms of the dead land weave us into one cocoon that we may not crowd our neighbors.

CHEE MOO. Why does not his great-grandmother speak?

LING WON. It is not so ordained. She being the woman, offended the ears of the gods — and her husband — with many words when alive, so the just gods suffer me only to speak now that we are dead.

CHEE MOO. Can she hear and see us, too?

LING WON. She can hear and see all. There, too, the gods are just, for in life the nights enamored me from home to listen to the moon-birds in the shadows of the trees, while I sucked the honey of the night-blooming cereus along the way, and too often the morning dawned while I still drank in the songs of the women on the flower boats.

CHEE MOO. And will little Wu Hoo Git live as you do in death?

LING WON. Too soon if you obey me not. I come to warn and save him.

CHEE MOO. Who would harm my little Wu Hoo Git?

LING WON. The august Wu Sin Yin, his father, even now sharpens a sword to cut the thread that holds him to this life.

CHEE MOO. I dreamed it and so I fled.

LING WON. I sent that dream; little Wu Hoo Git would have passed to us had it not been that his great-grandmother, the other half of my spirit-self, sewed a stitch in the brain of Lee Sin, the farmer, so that he could not pick up the thread of thought woven there by Wu Sin Yin, your husband, who had ordered the murder of the little Wu Hoo Git.

CHEE MOO [*horrified*]. Too terrible! Oh, oh, I could fill a crystal vase with a mother's tears.

LING WON. I come to break the crystal vase of a mother's tears that would drown her boy.

CHEE MOO. What shall I do?

LEE WON. Send the august Wu Hoo Git on his world journey alone.

CHEE MOO. You would not take the little Wu Hoo Git, for you have a woman's heart within your breast and know a mother's meaning.

LING WON. You must come to us that Wu Hoo Git may live to the glory of the Emperor.

CHEE MOO. But he will lose his way without a mother's care and love.

LING WON. The future is for the gods; we are spirits and know only the path back to the moon whence we came. His steps are toward the sun, whither he goes.

CHEE MOO. Let me go with him.

LING WON. Not so. Wu Sin Yin would know you, for you are grown. He is so little that he looks like other babes and may escape.

CHEE MOO. But he needs a mother to feed and look after him.

LING WON. The ravens will feed him; the eagles will show him the mountain peaks; the humming-birds will tell him the names of the flowers along his path; the goldfish will show him whither the streams flow straight. And a maiden will arise to teach him the story of love. Fear not. The Gods of Mercy and of Love will hold his hands.

CHEE MOO. My Wu Hoo Git — my little Wu Hoo Git. Your mother's heart melts for you.

LING WON. He will go up and up and up, till he wears the sun-hued garment.

CHEE MOO. The sun-hued garment! My Wu Hoo Git. [*To spirit.*] Leave me not. My heaven-descended son of the morning fades in my arms as you fade. He goes from me into the glory of paleness, while I cry out for his peaceful rest.

LING WON. The evil lines only wrought by demon cunning fade from his cheeks before the light of a new soul day. The cramped and evil thoughts born of his father's life flee before the sword thrusts of good thoughts which a mother marshals to cradle him.

CHEE MOO. You go from me!

LING WON. Write Wu Hoo Git's name and history on his coat and come to us. Farewell — we must depart into the shadows. [*Spirit retires.*]

CHEE MOO. Leave me not — oh, leave me not! [*Laughing and crying.*] Wu Hoo Git, my Wu Hoo Git. I am a willow weeping over the stream of my own life-blood. I will write your name on your garment in a mother's blood that the life of the mother's veins from which you sprang may enter into and become a part of your soul.

[CHEE MOO *here bites the second finger of her left hand until the blood comes, which she allows to drop into the palm of her hand; then dips the finger-nail of her right hand into the blood and writes on the white under-garment of the child, sobbing during the speech.*]

My baby — my boy! [*Writes.*] This is Wu Hoo Git, pure and perfect, now, decreed to live ten thousand years. A mother's tears, falling as rain from heaven, will fill the valleys across his path that his life-boat may float from mountain peak to mountain peak and confound his enemies who follow after. More words in the mother's blood — I grow weak.

Ancestors guard you,
Love embrace you.

[*Stops. To spirit, who is gone.*] Will I hear his baby cry and not be able to come to him? Must I see the tears in his baby eyes and not be able to wipe them away?

LING WON [*outside*]. Yes. Yes.

CHEE MOO. The mother who would give all and does give all — the ink in my veins runs out. Every drop must go by to the boy. [*Writes.*] Be kind to her who gives you love. Hope, pray, fight, live — to make others happy. The last drop, — the last drop in my veins to tell the story of my boy and put a prayer on his garment. All — my baby boy — all! A mother's love! I cannot let you go. Your baby hands cling about my heart. The light grows as gentle as the light of dreams. Wu Hoo Git — my baby — my Wu Hoo Git.

[*She now becomes faint with the loss of blood and sinks to the stage. Property man and his assistant bring ladder and place it at center of upper opening.* CHEE MOO *rises and climbs up four rungs of the ladder. Property man holds ladder.*]

CHORUS. She climbs to Heaven.

[*Music. Enter door left,* SUEY SIN FAH, *followed by* LEE SIN; *come center, see child, but take no notice of ladder or* CHEE MOO.]

SUEY SIN FAH. What babe is this? I see not the mother.

LEE SIN. His name is writ in blood upon his garment. 'T is Wu Hoo Git! We will fly with him.

[*Exeunt with child, door right.*]

CHEE MOO [*on Heaven-ladder, climbing farther up*]. My Wu Hoo Git! Your mother will never see you wear the sun-hued garment, but she will know.

TABLEAU CURTAIN

[NOTE. *At the end of act, in place of curtain calls, the* CHORUS *comes before the blue curtain and offers thanks in the name of the company.*]

CHORUS [*appearing*]. I bow and thank you in the name of my brothers of the Pear Tree Garden for the kindness you have shown. I ask indulgence. I would permit them to appear and voice their thanks did not tradition forbid. I shall tell them; it will put joy in their hearts. At the close of our story if they still stand in the light of your favor, it will please me to permit them to come before you, if you do not adulate them too much for their good. I bow.

[*Exits.*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

After the house curtain is taken up the tableau curtains are slightly parted and the property man enters. He walks to extreme right, then to extreme left and back to center, striking large gong; then exits through opening in tableau curtains. Orchestra on stage plays short overture. At crash of cymbals CHORUS *appears before the curtains and bows to right, left and center.*

CHORUS. I come again because I promised. I bow again. [*Bows three times.*] You may rely on my august word, for I deal in facts alone uncolored by fancy. My brothers of the Pear Tree Garden are not accountable to truth, as they speak what the author of our play, — I will advise you later of him, — has set down for them to speak. Authors and poets color the truth by the prettiness of their fancy. I bow to them, however, telling you to beware of them, for I derive my opportunity from the soaring of their imagination to present my august self to you. To this extent authors are magnificently worthy. Wu Sin Yin, the evil father, was unable to kill his august son, Wu Hoo Git. This celestial young prince had dwelt twelve moons, when last you heard his baby cry of parting with his honorable and august mother, Chee Moo, who took her passage heavenward in your glorious presence. But time has honorably pursued its venerable way. Wu Hoo Git has grown into youthful manhood, and stands at the portal of flowery life. He must pluck the azaleas of youth and observe them wither at the touch of his golden finger-nails. He must know the temple of the body before his body knows the temple of his mind. [*Bell sounds off.*] The great bell calls me — as it calls him. The bell-maker cast it of pure gold and silver, but its note proved brazen. The Son of Heaven was supremely annoyed. The bell-maker recast it. When the metal was molten, to save her father's life, for fear its note might again carry base tones, his daughter disposed of her body by springing into the mass of white heat; so her soul became of the bell wrought by her father. The metals welded with her spirit, and its tone was then one of virtuous harmony and love. Wu Hoo Git, too, must pass through molten life, that the fires may purify his soul and weld it into the purest strain. I augustly bow; you honorably listen.

[CHORUS *turns his back to audience, makes gesture with his fan. At crash of cymbals, tableau curtains are drawn.* CHORUS *now goes up to table, center, property man discovered seated on stool in center of stage. When music stops, property man arises, indicates to* CHORUS *that scene is set and crosses to left.*]

[CHORUS *then speaks.*] 'T is the home of Lee Sin, the farmer; though humble in appearance, it is crowded with riches.

[*Music. Enter* SUEY SIN FAH, *left. She comes down left, opens imaginary door, steps over the door-sill, closes door,*

crosses to center and stands in front of stool before speaking.]

SUEY SIN FAH. It is the twentieth anniversary of the birth of Wu Hoo Git, who has grown into beautiful manhood. The Goddess of Mercy — Kuan Yin — she who hears prayers and is the giver of children — has given me no baby of my own to care for, but in secret mercy has given me Wu Hoo Git to foster-mother. When I thought I held a babe and the breath of childhood was sweet, I looked and the flower had bloomed. Youth sprang from my arm-petals to laugh and run and play the first games of life. A few days give the first farewell to the mother's arms, a few months and the babe is a babe no more, a few years and our mother journey is done. We look in the mirror of the past with the gray upon our temples, and we find strong arms to protect us where we had protected the helpless babe. The boy runs away. He promises to return. He thinks he will return to the mother breast. You may think that all is well with Wu Hoo Git, but it is not so. Due Jung Fah's son, the Daffodil, grown to man, bars the way to Wu Hoo Git and his world-place. Like all adolescent boys, Wu Hoo Git longs for the world and its dangers. If he leaves our sheltering care, he will never return to the mother breast except in memory. I worship my soul alone. [*Sits on stool, center. Music.*]

[*Enter* LEE SIN, *door left. Carries hoe over shoulder, wears a beard. Comes down left, opens imaginary door, steps over sill, closes the door, crosses to right.*]

LEE SIN. Prosperity is mine. My ox ploughs the field and it grows pearly with rice. You touch the loom and it weaves rich fabrics. We dwell in the glory of our beautiful foster-child.

[SUEY SIN FAH, *going to him, puts one arm about his neck and covers her face with the other hand.*]

SUEY SIN FAH. The august Wu Hoo Git has gone forever.

LEE SIN. Not so. Tell me not so. I murdered for him. Could a father do more?

SUEY SIN FAH. The string of our kite is broken and the kite drops down from its heaven-kissed place past the horizon. He is grown, and longs for the paths of pleasure where the way is piled with hungry evil gods. He demands the shadows of his past. He cries for his ancestors and we dare not give them to him. We must put him from his purpose or the evil-born son of the second wife, Due Jung Fah, will pursue and slay him.

LEE SIN. Fear not! He is not of the common horde whose palm is dulled to pleasure by hard toil. He is august and needs the luxury of the joy of living. The gods rain favors of grace and beauty and perfumed paths on such as he. Remember whence he sprang. His treasure chest is full of gold which the gods gave to feed his glorious appetite. Soon the man's life journey to match his exalted station must call him.

SUEY SIN FAH. Still I fear. I must wait by the hearthstone, where he will never play again. Never again will he make my knees his ancestral tablets and coo his baby prayer to them.

LEE SIN. Neither spirits nor Due Jung Fah's son can harm him now. [*Crosses to left. Opens imaginary door.*] Look! He comes like the sun over the eastern hill. He brings a new day to us.

[*Crosses to right again. Music.*]

[*Enter door left,* WU HOO GIT.]

WU HOO GIT. [*Strikes picture in doorway. Comes down left. Leaps over imaginary door-sill and crosses to center.*] I am Wu Hoo Git! I am tired of classics. I long for the free air of life.

LEE SIN. You will not find contentment there.

WU HOO GIT. Then where shall I find contentment?

LEE SIN. In hard work and pure love.

WU HOO GIT. And where will I find pure love?

SUEY SIN FAH. In a mother's arms.

LEE SIN. In a wife's embrace.

WU HOO GIT. The woman answers one way, the man another. In the world there are many answers. I must hear them all to judge.

LEE SIN. Go not from us. Be counseled by a father.

SUEY SIN FAH. And by a mother's love.

WU HOO GIT. Where is my real mother waiting? Where does my real father reside?

LEE SIN [*confusedly*]. Our love withholds much that you will know in time.

WU HOO GIT. In time — always in time. I have played hide-and-seek with the sun-rays and the moon-rays, I have laughed from the mountain peak at the typhoon sweeping the valley below. But when I ask you for my ancestral tablets you tell me to wait.

SUEY SIN FAH. Till wisdom comes.

WU HOO GIT. Why should I be denied? A babe knows its mother. I demand my parents. I feel the blood of eagles in my veins. I demand, I say!

LEE SIN. I cannot.

SUEY SIN FAH. I will not yet.

WU HOO GIT. Then I go to find them. [*Goes up right to door.*] Even at the portals of high Heaven. My purse is full, but without my ancestors, I dwell not in honor.

LEE SIN. The world is large and you know not the dangers that will cross your stumbling way.

WU HOO GIT. I fear not. I am grown to be an august man.

[*Large gong. Music. Exits door right.*]

SUEY SIN FAH [*going up toward door right*]. Wu Hoo Git, my Wu Hoo Git! Come back to me! Oh, go not away, my boy! Rest here cradled in my love. Permit me to rock you to sleep to the song of gentle breezes and the tune of tiny bells.

LEE SIN. [*Goes to* SUEY SIN FAH. *Puts arm around her.*] He has the call of the world now and must answer.

[*They exeunt door right. Property man's assistants place four stools in a row across stage with spaces between them. Take two stools from left and place them right of stool which is at center; take one stool from wall left and place it left of stool center. Property man then makes gesture to* CHORUS *and crosses to left.*]

CHORUS [*rises*]. 'T is the flowery way of pleasant evenings. He comes! Wu Hoo Git's rival, the Daffodil, coddling his brain with dark thoughts. [*Sits.*]

[*Music. Enter* DAFFODIL *preceded by two attendants, one carries large red banner, the other large fan. They stand either side of door left. He strikes attitude in doorway with fan, turns around slowly and as he faces front again property man drops sword on bottom of property box. Expression of pain crosses* DAFFODIL'S *face. He crosses to center. Property man brings bouquet of flowers for him to smell, standing left of him.*]

WU FAH DIN. I advise this honorable audience that I am a man, though I possess a daffodil nature. I go to view delightful embroideries, but retard my footsteps, that you may observe my charm. I was born great. Wu Sin Yin was my father, and Due Jung Fah, the second wife, my mother. A wonderful alliance, as I am the superb result. [*Property man holds flowers for him to smell again.*] I am, therefore, the rival of Wu Hoo Git, who dwells, it is whispered, in an humble mountain home, whence he will go forth to seek his world-place. I am not happy while he dwells anywhere — so he must not dwell. He is simply vulgarly manly, while I possess feminine qualities of great luxuriance. [*Smells flowers again. Property man draws them away from him and puts them in box left. Property man then sits and reads Chinese paper.*] I would contend with him, man to Daffodil, but it might break my finger-nails and establish a bad precedent. You may think the match unequal, because of my delicacy in a contest with brawn; but I assure you that it is not so. Craft, guided by cruelty, outweighs vulgar manliness. I must contrive to destroy his honesty and cleanness of life. [*Attendant fans him with large fan.*] I will call to my aid Yin Suey Gong, whom you will meet and know, by the hump on his back. I will have him present his porcelains to the unsuspecting Wu Hoo Git. He deals deliciously in porcelains. He will drop flowers of pleasure in Wu Hoo Git's path that my rival may inhale their odors of vice. Observe how I contend with brawn. [*Music. Attendants go up right and exeunt.*

DAFFODIL *goes up toward door as he speaks.*] Cut the flowers in my path that I may walk.

[*Exits door right. Music changes.*]

[*Enter door left,* YIN SUEY GONG. *Carries staff. Music continues during speech.*]

YIN SUEY GONG. [*Comes down to center bowing.*] I am Yin Suey Gong of the monkey form. The air was lukewarm when I came, ghost clouds were racing the wind. I was dusted by butterfly wings along my path. Bringing pleasure to the owner of gold is my business. A dragon yawned and belched me forth. A tooth caught me and I was born cramped of back. I give those who were born straight [*chuckles*] and august of face the world's pleasures. Then to avenge myself on mother nature, who distorted me, I pluck down their star and delight in its fall. [*Chuckles.*] I watch the flower lanterns of their vanity burn till the ribs stick out like skeletons. Then I laugh, for they are crooked in purse and without love. I flatter them till I have them in my grasp, then I mock at them, for they are fools. I deal with the fair and they become crooked-brained. I juggle hearts. I toss them in the air and cross them and dance them on my finger-tips and catch them on my upturned nose. Sometimes one falls and leaves a blood spot where it fell. Then I gurgle and juggle on, for hearts are my currency and a few marred and broken ones are easily replaced.

WU FAH DIN. [*Enters, comes down left and crosses to right, dropping folded red paper, which represents a Chinese check. Backs up stage to door right as he speaks.*] Wu Hoo Git approaches. Enmesh him. Tarnish him. It must be done with perfume, and gently. [*Exits.*]

YIN SUEY GONG [*center*]. I shall approach with my arms full of presents for the adolescent Wu Hoo Git.

[*Music. Enter* WU HOO GIT. *Door left.*]

WU HOO GIT [*coming down left*]. Where do I find myself?

YIN SUEY GONG. In the land where the honey is sweet and the bees have lost their sting.

WU HOO GIT. What is this land?

YIN SUEY GONG. [*Bows going up to him.*] This is the land of perfumed pleasure. Where the cups are filled with silver rice-wine and the lips of love are heavy with greetings and your every desire is answered.

WU HOO GIT. Its story had been traced on a sweet-meat jar. But it is not the land I seek, for it tells not of my ancestors.

[*Moves a little right. Turns back to audience.*]

YIN SUEY GONG. You are augustly wise. You are old and learned. I bow to the august magnificence of your dress, the delicacy of the golden guards to your honorable finger-nails, your wonderful jewelry of amber — your astute wisdom —

[WU HOO GIT *shuts eyes in delight at flattery.*]

WU HOO GIT. I am transcendently wise.

YIN SUEY GONG. Your boots will surely decorate a city's gates when you have passed to your ancestors. You are old for your age. The world and life will make you older. Dreams await you. I greet you and lay the world at your feet.

WU HOO GIT. I would put you in a seat of friendship beside me.

YIN SUEY GONG. There are only two things to please the taste of an august man like you. [*Bowing.*] Some will tell you in deceit that there are many things to please, but there are only two.

WU HOO GIT. Only two in the broad world, to people my pleasure?

YIN SUEY GONG. Only two. You may travel, you may study, you may know, but pearly wine and luscious women are all that you will find. Some far countries boast of the dance, but it is a part of woman. Our august land oft speaks in song, but that, too, is sweet from the lips of woman only. It is not the note or string. It is the lips that sing. To know wine and women is rarer far than to know classics. The great scholars know this [*bows*], but praise not my honesty. [*Turns away right.*]

WU HOO GIT. You make me wonder. I have learned philosophy. But it concerns me not in my search for my ancestors.

[*Starts toward door right.*]

YIN SUEY GONG. Be tutored by glorious

woman, the rims of whose rice wine-cups are crystallized with kisses.

[*Moves away a little.*]

Wu Hoo Git. What are kisses?

Yin Suey Gong. The meeting of the pollen of two flowers that float to each other on a heaven-sent breeze.

Wu Hoo Git. Such an august meeting must make the sweetest incense for the gods.

Yin Suey Gong. It does — only the evil one more often catches the breath.

Wu Hoo Git. And why?

Yin Suey Gong. The gods have others taste the sweets first for fear of poison.

Wu Hoo Git. But there can be no poison in the meeting of the flowers.

Yin Suey Gong. There may be birth and birth leads to death. [*Music. During which* Wu Hoo Git *crosses to left. Listening.* Yin Suey Gong *watches the effect on him.*] Love birds, flowers of happiness, come to garden your pleasure. They will teach you life, rarer than philosophy, richer than classics. [*Enter door left four flower-girls at music cue. Strike picture in doorway, bow forward, then to left. They cross and stand above stools.*] To your sale thrones, my princesses fair!

[*Girls come to below stools, backs to audience. They mount at music cue, with the help of the assistant property men. Girls then turn front, fans still before their faces.*]

Wu Hoo Git. [*When music stops, crosses to center.*] How modest they are! Fans before their rose faces! [*Looks at girls, delighted.*] I am glad I came to this world. It makes smiling in my heart.

Yin Suey Gong. It has pleased many.

Wu Hoo Git. By what charm do women hold us enchained?

Yin Suey Gong. Wise men have wondered. [*Laughs, moves right.*]

Wu Hoo Git. May I approach them with my voice?

Yin Suey Gong. And get strange answers!

Wu Hoo Git. How many moons have passed since you graced the earth?

See Quoe Fah [*dropping fan*]. Sixteen years of moons.

Wu Hoo Git. Put up your fan! Who are *you?*

Mow Dan Fah. A peony flower.

Wu Hoo Git. Then you will fade.

Mow Dan Fah. Pick me while my perfume lasts.

Wu Hoo Git. You are as dainty as the embroidery on an Empress's gown. [*Frightened, she puts fan over her face.* Wu Hoo Git *moves to* Yin Suey Gong.] May I speak to the next one?

Yin Suey Gong. The gods painted many that man might choose one!

Wu Hoo Git. [*Starts to go up right.*] Let me go back to philosophy and my ancestors.

Yin Suey Gong [*stopping him*]. And never know life?

Wu Hoo Git. [*To third girl, who lowers fan.*] She tipped her fan to me. I saw her eyes. I will wait and talk to her. Her hands are like penciled porcelain. She has the color of plum-tree buds. Are you — just like the other?

Yong Soo Kow. I was kissed by a more southern sun.

Wu Hoo Git. Then two flowers met and a — a child was born?

Yong Soo Kow. You were not one of the flowers!

Wu Hoo Git. What means she?

Yin Suey Gong. A sunbeam played upon her hydrangea lip.

Wu Hoo Git [*excited*]. And danced in her eye and painted her cheek,

Yin Suey Gong. You should have been the sunbeam. She invites you.

Wu Hoo Git. This was never taught me in philosophy. How much there is to learn! [*Indicating fourth girl.*] That one coughed. [*Sighs.*] Send her to the Drug Hall of Propitious Munificence for the Great Blessing Pill, or the Double Mystery Pill, or the Thousand Gold Pill for maidens. I suffer to see her suffer.

Yin Suey Gong. Her cough is a gentle salutation. She fears you may go astray if you talk too long to her august sisters.

Wu Hoo Git [*delighted, whispering*]. Does she think so much of me? I like her. She has a mother's heart.

Yin Suey Gong. They all have mother-hearts.

Wu Hoo Git. I never had a mother. [*Crosses down center. Turns back to audience, looking at girls.*] Now I have four. [*Music. Girls sing. At end of song short dance. The girls turn around on stools and face front again. During song* Wu Hoo Git *crosses to left. At end of dance he speaks.*] She sings with lips that part like opening roses. My foster-mother never sang like that. The blood runs faster in my veins. [*Crosses to* Yin Suey Gong.] I feel something here that beats.

Yin Suey Gong. That is your heart. Philosophy knows nothing of it.

Wu Hoo Git. I like her. She is so sweetly made — round and soft and delicate — like a vase we would embrace for fear it might fall and shatter its loveliness.

Yin Suey Gong. You may hold her and embrace her beauties.

Wu Hoo Git. I might let her fall and shatter her dainty roundness.

Yin Suey Gong. You will learn in time.

Wu Hoo Git [*tries*]. But my arms may not be strong enough.

Yin Suey Gong. Hers were made to help you.

Wu Hoo Git. [*Crosses to* Chow Wan, *left; awkwardly embraces her. Other girls lower fans and look at him. He then crosses back to* Yin Suey Gong.] It is easier than I thought. She grows more delicately beautiful. She is sweeter than the rarest vase. I like the holding of her. Her breath is incense.

Yin Suey Gong. You may taste her lips.

[*He crosses to* Chow Wan *again, ingenuously kisses her and crosses back to* Yin Suey Gong.]

Wu Hoo Git. Sweetmeats rare.

[*Starts to kiss* Chow Wan *again, stopped by* Yin Suey Gong.]

Yin Suey Gong. I will sell her to you.

Wu Hoo Git [*astonished*]. Is she for sale?

Yin Suey Gong. Everything I possess is for sale.

Wu Hoo Git. Would you keep none for yourself?

Yin Suey Gong. I would be selfish to retain such delicate wares. All perfumed flowers may be cut by a golden knife. They wait upon the market for your desire.

[*Bowing.*]

Wu Hoo Git. I will buy them all.

Yin Suey Gong. Like most men you would have them all, but, if you purchase four maids, you would sell three, or present them to your friends.

Wu Hoo Git. [*With inspiration. Moves left.*] Then I will buy her who coughs. [*Girls drop fans and put them up quickly.*] They dropped their fans and looked at me. I never felt such a delicate shock. It is like reading the classics at one glance by the light of ray-tailed comets. May they do it again?

Yin Suey Gong. Not till you purchase.

Wu Hoo Git. And what must I pay?

Yin Suey Gong. All you have in your chased gold purse.

Wu Hoo Git. [*Crosses to* Yin Suey Gong, *right.*] But I have nine thousand taels! What shall I do when I give them all to you?

Yin Suey Gong. Send home for more like every august son who would see the world.

Wu Hoo Git. [*Turns left looking at purse.*] Nine thousand taels for a mother!

Chow Wan. I am worth more. [*He looks up at her.*] You will find it so.

Wu Hoo Git. [*Drops purse.*] Take my purse, most gracious Yin Suey Gong. [*Goes to* Chow Wan, *left.*] Lee Sin will send me more. She would suffer so alone. [*Music. Three girls turn on stools, with backs to audience and descend, assisted by the property man, and exeunt door right.* Yin Suey Gong *follows them up to door and turns, looking at* Wu Hoo Git. Wu Hoo Git *helps* Chow Wan *off of stool.*] They do not smile on me.

Yin Suey Gong. The evil one fans them with jealousy. You did not buy them, too.

Wu Hoo Git. Are they angry?

Yin Suey Gong. They are filled with humility. Farewell! [*Aside.*] He drowns in the vase of pleasure. The Daffodil will smile.

[*Exits right, laughing. Property man's assistants push four stools together, then bring four chairs and place them back of stools, touching them. An assistant exits right but returns immediately with two bamboo poles to be used*

as oars. Hands one to another assistant and they stand a little above and to the right of the chairs. Property man gets drapery and places it over back of chairs. Then he places two cushions on the stools which he gets from left near property box. Music stops when WU HOO GIT *speaks.*]

WU HOO GIT. By what sweet name are you called? [*Taking her hand.*]

CHOW WAN. Chow Wan, Autumn Cloud.

WU HOO GIT [*dropping her hand, backing away*]. That's augustly pretty. What shall I do with you now I have bought you?

CHOW WAN. [*Goes to him, places head on his shoulder.*] I will teach you.

WU HOO GIT. Your voice is like an honorable zephyr. Bring it closer.

[*Puts arm about her.*]

CHOW WAN. You are learning.

WU HOO GIT. But you have not taught me a thing that I could behold.

CHOW WAN. The gods have taught you many things that you can feel yet know not of.

WU HOO GIT. I do not understand, but I like you better than philosophy.

CHOW WAN. When you have said farewell to me, you will be a wiser philosopher.

WU HOO GIT. [*Backs away from her.*] Must we part?

[*Starts to embrace her, she evades him, crosses to center below.*]

CHOW WAN. Not for many perfumed days.

[*Property man makes gesture to* CHORUS *who rises.*]

CHORUS. 'T is a flower boat which floats upon a silver river of love.

[CHOW WAN *seats herself on cushion of boat and invites* WU HOO GIT *to enter.*]

CHOW WAN. Come with me in the flower boat and float among the lotus plants while the night birds perch on the moon-rays and sing to us, and I answer their song.

[*He gets into the boat. After he is settled two assistants with poles pretend to row the boat. Musician runs two pieces of sandpaper together in time with the strokes.*]

WU HOO GIT. You think of such sweet ways to wander from the minutes of the third day of the third moon to the fourth day of the third moon.

CHOW WAN. In my arms you will wander ten thousand years.

WU HOO GIT. [*His arm about her.*] I wish your three sisters had stayed with us. It would have warmed their hearts to see us thus. [*She drops her fan.*]

CHOW WAN. You are so worldly-wise. [*Fans herself slowly.*] They would have purred with delight.

WU HOO GIT. [*Song off stage.*] The silver sails fill with the summer breeze. Wild bells tinkle in my august veins. I never heard them there before.

CHOW WAN. [*Turns away from him.*] See the lotus lanterns on the water wafting their candle-light to us!

WU HOO GIT. [*Starts up.*] This is the night of love. Let not the morning come.

CHOW WAN. A love boat passes us in the moonlight.

WU HOO GIT. [*Looking. She follows imaginary boat from left to right with her hand.*] It holds a woman and a man in sweet embrace. It is the lotus-lipped fan girl I met with you.

CHOW WAN. Yin Suey Gong has sold her to him.

[*They follow the imaginary boat with their eyes.* WU HOO GIT *with his hand around to right holds picture until song off stage stops.*]

WU HOO GIT. I should have bought her and saved her from him.

CHOW WAN. Your gold is not enough for one. [*She puts head on his shoulder.*] Let us land for more.

WU HOO GIT. Wait until the night is passed.

CHOW WAN. No! We will find it sweeter in my home. You fill the purse for the fruits, cakes and candies. I will shadow the lanterns and draw the silken curtains to await your coming. [*He starts to embrace her. She stops him.*] I have more to teach you. [*At gesture from* WU HOO GIT *the assistants stop rowing. They get out of boat. Music stops. Assistants with bamboo poles*

exeunt right. Property man takes drapery away. Assistants remove chairs. The fourth stool is left in center of the stage with red cushion on it. Property man, after gesture to CHORUS, *sits left. Assistants now exeunt left.*] Fill your purse.

WU HOO GIT. It takes so much money to love, my Autumn Cloud.

[*Music, he exits right.* CHOW WAN *watching him exit.*]

CHOW WAN. He has flown on wings of swiftness for a second purse full.

[*She crosses at back to left.*]

CHORUS [*rising*]. 'T is a love nest.

[CHOW WAN *opens imaginary door, steps over sill, closes door, and sits on stool center. Music continues.*]

CHOW WAN. He has flown on wings of swiftness for a second purse full. I must wait at home alone. I will change my gown to one of softer silk; dress my head like a princess for my Wu Hoo Git. Bring me lanterns of blue and pink that their light may tint the eye glance of him who comes. Crowd my abode with almond flowers and open the lattice so that the moon-rays dancing on my goldfish pond may make love to the lantern's light within. Fill the air with perfumes of sandal-wood. Bring me my handkerchief of pale blue embroidered with purple wistaria. I must weep at my Wu Hoo Git's long delay. Bring my Yeuh Chin that I may be playing when his footfall tinkles on the path. Place carved wood screens about me that no one may behold my beauty but him I wait for. He comes! He comes! My lover returns with his purse of gold.

YIN SUEY GONG. [*Enters door left, comes down, opens imaginary door, steps over sill, closes door and goes to* CHOW WAN. *Music stops.*] What do you here alone?

CHOW WAN. Waiting as becomes me. Wu Hoo Git is filling his purse with gold drops.

YIN SUEY GONG. It is not enough. I can sell you to an emperor.

CHOW WAN. An emperor! [*Rises. Moves down right a little and stands with back to audience.*] Lead me to his fascinations.

YIN SUEY GONG. A chair of lacquered gold awaits you. You must approach him as becomes his rank.

CHOW WAN. [*Music on moon-guitar. She goes up to door right and turns.*] I will approach him closely.

[*Exits door right. Music stops. Property man removes stool and cushion to left.*]

YIN SUEY GONG. This is my lucky day. I've sold all my porcelains, but I must have Wu Hoo Git's second purse full to line my treasure sack. I must flatter him into another purchase, or my head will smile from a bamboo pole at my crooked trunk. My head against his purse of gold.

WU HOO GIT. [*Music. Entering door left, running to left center.*] Chow Wan — my Autumn Cloud! I bring the mountain's gold to you.

YIN SUEY GONG. Your purse is welcome.

WU HOO GIT. Where dwells my honorable Autumn Cloud, — Chow Wan?

YIN SUEY GONG. Drifting in the azure sky after a butterfly's perch. I will find you a spring cloud that is warmer.

WU HOO GIT. I understand not your speech.

YIN SUEY GONG. The august Wu Hoo Git has grown so old in an hour of pleasure that he has come to man's estate and should now follow the pleasures of an august man.

WU HOO GIT. I want my Autumn Cloud.

YIN SUEY GONG. Kite flying is more for the education of a man who has seen the world and grown weary, as you have.

WU HOO GIT. But I am not weary. Where is my Chow Wan? I have a purse of jewels for her.

YIN SUEY GONG. You should be augustly happy, for most men who have seen the pleasure path have lost their purse. Chow Wan has flown to a daintier nest, silk woven.

WU HOO GIT. Flown, as the morning light comes to greet our love!

YIN SUEY GONG. I will sell you a more comforting mate.

WU HOO GIT. But I own her heart for I bought my august Autumn Cloud with my gold.

YIN SUEY GONG. I sold her for the gold of another whose purse was deeper.

Wu Hoo Git. But she is completely mine. The crevices of her heart are mine to nestle in. She told me so herself. You are a thief.

Yin Suey Gong. I should not else be supremely wise.

Wu Hoo Git. Bring back my august other self to me. You opened Heaven's doors of love to me, gave me the sweets of life — the perfumed breath of the ages of love. Then you close the doors, and tell me to find that joy-light again in other eyes.

Yin Suey Gong. You had your hour of fleeting pleasure. Do you expect with your small glint of gold to buy a lifetime of happiness?

Wu Hoo Git. I am grown to man and I can wreak the vengeance of my might on him who steals my blessings.

Yin Suey Gong. Be augustly calm. Woman is merely a matter of gold. Give me more than he gave and I will buy her back.

Wu Hoo Git. From the arms of another? The gods themselves can never make her the same Autumn Cloud you stole.

Yin Suey Gong. Another will do as well, if you close your exalted eyes.

Wu Hoo Git. You shall change, as she has changed, so that all the gods of yesterday and the gods of to-morrow cannot right you into what you were. I will carve your august hump.

Yin Suey Gong. I will give you back your gold for mercy.

Wu Hoo Git. I am not for sale. Bring me your honorable hump that I may chop it into the likeness of my Autumn Cloud.

[*Crosses to left.*]

Yin Suey Gong. I will defend my august hump.

[*He drops his staff. They stand in attitude of fighting.* Wu Hoo Git *left,* Yin Suey Gong *right. Property man takes short double sword in scabbard and one short single sword in scabbard, out of property box, crosses to center, hands double sword to* Yin Suey Gong, *single sword to* Wu Hoo Git, *and retires to left. During fight musician comes down to center below* Chorus' *table and works cymbals. Cymbals crash with the striking of swords. The whole fight is conducted in a slow methodical manner, with much turning.* Wu Hoo Git *finally cuts off the hump of* Yin Suey Gong, *taking red bag from under his coat, and he sinks to the stage in a sitting position back toward the left. Property man places pillow for* Yin Suey Gong *in wrong position. He motions him to bring it closer, which property man does with his foot.* Yin Suey Gong *now lies down, making himself quite comfortable.* Wu Hoo Git *stands over him, and as he holds red bag up at arm's length loud crashes of cymbals.* Wu Hoo Git *then crosses to left and victoriously gives his sword to property man.*]

[Chow Wan *enters left, stands near doorway.*]

Wu Hoo Git [*going up to her left center near door*]. Enfold me in your arms. Taste my lips again. Chow Wan, my Autumn Cloud. [*Embracing her.*]

Chow Wan. [*Bitterly goes down, kneels and leans over body of* Yin Suey Gong.] You have killed my Yin Suey Gong. Who will sell me now? Evil spirits clutch at you. Depths of night enfold you.

[*Falls over body weeping.*]

Wu Hoo Git. I departed his hump for selling you from me.

Chow Wan. He got more adorable gold than you could give.

Wu Hoo Git [*crossing right at back*]. Gold is not the measure of the heart.

Chow Wan. Go into the pleasure world and see. My monkey, my Yin Suey Gong, my beautiful Yin Suey Gong.

Wu Hoo Git. Console yourself. [Chow Wan *looks at him.*] I am not going to kill him again.

[Girls *enter left and cross down to body of* Yin Suey Gong.]

Chow Wan. He has killed our master!

Girls. Killed him. [*All kneel.* See Quoe

Fah, *left of* Chow Wan, Mow Dan Fah, *right of* Chow Wan, Yong Soo Kow, *left of* See Quoe Fah.] Our poor Yin Suey Gong.

Chow Wan [*pathetically*]. Who will traffic in our love now?

Wu Hoo Git. Gold *is* the measure of your affection. Your hearts are outbalanced in the scales by a grain of yellow dust in the heart traffic of him I slew. I repent his death for in an evil way he was a tutor who taught me pleasure; though a traffic not smiled upon by the gods, it must have some purpose for good or it would not be. May he glory in his ancestors!

Chow Wan. You have no ancestors.

The Girls. No ancestors?

Wu Hoo Git. I have tarried too long in the way of pleasure. I go to seek my ancestors. I give him back his hump.

[*Throws red bag on stage. Exits door right.*]

Chow Wan. He is monkey-shaped and can walk upon the clouds. [Girls *hold hands up.*] He is above human. Put back his hump and he will live again to traffic in our hearts. His superb breath returns. His honorable eyes roll to us. We will be sold again.

[Mow Dan Fah *gives red bag to* Chow Wan.]

Yin Suey Gong [*coming to life. During scene when* Yin Suey Gong *comes to life, music effects.*] Restore my honorable hump — [Chow Wan *places it under his coat*] that I may breathe delicious breath. [*Sighs.*] He cut it off.

Chow Wan. Wu Hoo Git. He will perish for his deed. He has no ancestors to pray to.

Yin Suey Gong. No ancestors! No ancestors! [*He rises, picking up staff.* Girls *rise and back away up right.*] I am augustly avenged! To the market place for hearts.

[Girls *exeunt right followed by* Yin Suey Gong *to door. Property man kicks death pillow to assistant left. Then picks up two swords. Puts them in scabbards in box left.*]

Chorus. [*Rises.*] The Daffodil, tired of waiting for results, visits Yin Suey Gong.

Wu Fah Din. [*Enters left, followed by attendant, who carries red silk cord and stands up center.*] Where is the pleasure you promised me? Where are the delightful tintinnabulations of joy at his undoing? Feast my eyes.

Yin Suey Gong. He has gone.

Wu Fah Din. Lead me to his destruction.

Yin Suey Gong. He has gone to seek his ancestors.

Wu Fah Din. A cord about his neck. [*Attendant comes down, places cord around* Yin Suey Gong's *neck.*] Twist it, that I may see his lying tongue swell from his mouth.

Yin Suey Gong. Time, give me time. When the arrow misses you do not throw the bow away, but send another shaft on truer lines. I will contrive his ruin.

Wu Fah Din. Give me the cord. [*Takes end of cord.*] Follow to the palace.

[*Starts up for door right.*]

Yin Suey Gong. The scarf chafes my neck.

Wu Fah Din. It remains a gentle reminder, while we contrive again.

[*Exeunt right. Property man's assistants place table with cover center. Chair with cover and small stool on it right of table. They exeunt left.*]

Chorus. [*Rises.*] 'T is the house of Tai Char Shoong, the illustrious, father of Plum Blossom, the adored heroine of this play.

[*Enter* Plum Blossom (*Moy Fah Loy*) *and* See Noi *left and hold picture in doorway.*]

Moy Fah Loy. Come quickly. [*They move down left. Property man stands down left with bamboo pole in horizontal position across stage.*] From the window of this room we can see him pass.

[Wu Hoo Git *enters, comes down left, crosses below property man to right and exits up right.*]

See Noi. What, what, what!

Moy Fah Loy. Saw you not the youth of the kite hill? To the window! Open the lattice that I may peep.

[See Noi *opens imaginary shutters.*]

See Noi. 'T is Wu Hoo Git! Be careful lest he see you. [*Pulling her up stage.*] Remember your maiden modesty.

Moy Fah Loy [*looking at* Wu Hoo Git *through imaginary window.*] Saw you ever one who walks like him with godlike mien? He stands so straight the clouds separate to form a pathway for his brain. [*Turns, looks at* See Noi.] He looks not back. His eyes are not for woman, but eternities. [Moy Fah Loy *closes imaginary shutters and crosses to below table. Property man retires left with pole.*] Oh! A madness of dejection enters my fancy and chills my heart.

[*Enter* Tai Char Shoong *left. Strikes picture in doorway. Wood block and small gong. Coming down left between* See Noi *and* Moy Fah Loy.]

Tai Char Shoong. See Noi! Let my Plum Blossom be robed in richness becoming the birth of my daughter.

[Plum Blossom *crosses to* See Noi, *who goes to door with her as she exits left.*]

[*Crosses and sits right of table.*] See Noi, I am about to give my daughter in betrothal.

[See Noi *comes down left.*]

See Noi. I feared it, illustrious master.

Tai Char Shoong. How dare you fear what I command! You have loosed your tongue to my daughter.

See Noi [*frightened*]. No more than she has heard herself; gossip, breeze carried through each window lattice.

Tai Char Shoong. And of what do busy tongues complain?

See Noi. Of the future mother-in-law of her you would give in marriage.

Tai Char Shoong. A perfect woman, filled with knowledge of what a wife should be.

See Noi. 'T is whispered her son's first wife died of his mother's accomplishments.

Tai Char Shoong. What more could she have done for my daughter's sake?

See Noi. If it must be so, may she possess a hundred children and a thousand grandchildren.

Tai Char Shoong. It is too few to wish her. [*Music.*]

Moy Fah Loy. [*Enters left, richly gowned, comes down to below table center. Bows.*] Honorable father, I have done your bidding.

Tai Char Shoong. [*He holds out his hand. She comes to him.*] Let a smile of joy dwell upon your lips and behave in your most graceful manner, for the Widow of Ching comes to negotiate for the marriage of her son.

Moi Fah Loy. [*Turns front. Eyes down, head turned away.*] I smile in the house of my father, I might weep in the home of his friend.

Tai Char Shoong. A wife must take what the gods bestow upon her. [*Rises.*] Now approaches the august mother-in-law. Forget not the courtesies of such a meeting.

[*Music. The* Widow *and maid enter on a wheelbarrow trundled by assistant, followed by another with green card. They cross down left, then to right and up. Assistant presents card to* Tai Char Shoong, *who crosses to left, then assists them to alight from wheelbarrow and exits right. Assistant with wheelbarrow exits right.*]

Widow. Tai Char Shoong, I bestow upon this house a bow.

[*Bows. Maid takes small stool off chair and as* Widow *sits, places it under feet and retires back of her.*]

Tai Char Shoong. And I bestow upon the Widow of our great mandarin, departed to his ancestors, and the mother of our youthful mandarin, a bow. [*All bow again.*] Bring jade cups of tea and pipe.

[*Property man brings tray with two tea bowls and two cups and Chinese pipe. Places tray on table center. Then lights pipe and crosses to left and sits.*]

Widow. Is this Moy Fah Loy?

Moy Fah Loy. I am Moy Fah Loy.

[*Below table, bowing to her.*]

Widow. Let me observe you. Turn about with graceful composure. [*She does so.*] Your hair is arranged complacently; your feet are large.

Tai Char Shoong. [*Down left.*] That she may walk the easier to attend upon her mother-in-law.

WIDOW. Let me observe the nails of your fingers. There is a hair left in one eyebrow. It shows carelessness in preparing for my observation. Your lips should be painted thinner. Can you embroider?

[SEE NOI *gives lighted pipe to maid.*]

MOY FAH LOY. Kingfishers and storks.

WIDOW. Good birds, both. [*Maid gives pipe to* WIDOW.] Can you prepare with daintiness sweetmeats, watermelon seeds, rice wine?

[*She puffs pipe. Returns it to maid who then hands it to* SEE NOI, *who places it on table.*]

TAI CHAR SHOONG [*sadly*]. Her august mother, divinely departed, instructed her in the virtues of the home.

WIDOW. Permit me, Tai Char Shoong, to examine into your daughter's virtues, as I am augustly versed in virtues. You should wait upon me, your mother-in-law, with modest obeisance.

TAI CHAR SHOONG. Could she be other than a worshipful slave to such an honorable mother-in-law?

MOY FAH LOY. There are thirty-six kinds of mother-in-law, and she is every kind.

WIDOW. I will bestow upon you because of the excellence of this house, ten thousand taels.

TAI CHAR SHOONG. My house and daughter are illustriously honored.

WIDOW. [*Rises. Maid picks up stool as* WIDOW *rises and places it on chair.*] We will gracefully take the daughter of Tai Char Shoong into our hearts and home.

TAI CHAR SHOONG. The splendor of the honor of bestowing such a mother-in-law upon my daughter dazzles my modest eyes.

WIDOW. I take my departure. You are augustly blessed, my Plum Blossom, in having me to guide your way, in my illustrious son's house.

MOY FAH LOY. Augustly blessed!

WIDOW. [*Crossing up to door.* TAI CHAR SHOONG *goes to above table.*] Prepare your gracious self for the six ceremonies within three days, for I need your worthy service in my home.

[*Bows and exits, preceded by maid.* TAI CHAR SHOONG *bows and exits up right. Property man crosses to table, takes tea tray and pipe. Smokes pipe as he crosses to left. Places them in box left and sits.*]

MOY FAH LOY [*going to* SEE NOI *up right, who holds her in her arms*]. My mother-in-law! [*Looking up.*] Bring me poison!

SEE NOI. Say not so, honorable one. Think on the family.

MOY FAH LOY. Lead me to the tablets of my mother that I may pray to her and know.

[*Music. They exeunt right, property man and assistants arrange four chairs across stage with backs to audience and a stool center. Property man crosses to center and superintends placing of chairs. Over the backs of the chairs, beginning from the right, property man places white cloth tablets on which are painted in Chinese characters the following names: Chum Shou, Moy Kwai Fah Loy, Moy Fah Loy. He gets the two tablets mixed on the chairs left of stool center, and after reading the names changes them. After so placing the tablets property man sits on stool left, and starts to read paper. An assistant enters with bowl of rice. Gives it to property man, who smiles and takes it. Assistant exits. Property man then bows to* CHORUS *who has become annoyed at delay, and then sits and begins eating rice with chop sticks. Music during this business.*]

CHORUS. 'T is the resting place of the bodies of the departed.

WU HOO GIT. [*Enters left, comes right of stool center. Music forte until he gets to center, then stops. Looks at tablets.*] Here in the city of the dead I will find my impressive ancestors. I will pray at the tombs for the gods to give me an honorable mother. I must have had an august father once, for every one, they say, has had at least one august father. I will pray at the tombs for

the gods to give me an honorable mother, with a delicate name — one that drops like a sweet song from the lips. [*Reads, chair first right.*] Chum Shou, "Graceful Long Life." I like not her name. [*Crosses right.*] I will not pray to her. Here is a tomb that is deep in the ashes of burned paper money. I will dust away the ashes with my solemn breath. [*Blows on tablet, then reads tablet number two right.*] Moy Kwai Fah Loy, "Rose Bud." I care not for roses. With my solemn breath I cover her again with ashes. [*Blows breath on tablet, moves to left.*] Here is a quiet ancestral tablet. From within issues precious light. [*Reads number one left.*] Moy Fah Loy, "Plum Blossom." I like plums and I have scented the perfume of the blossoms. I will take Plum Blossom for motherhood. [*Property man puts down bowl of rice and places cushion before chair left center, holding chop sticks in other hand.*] I kneel [*does so*], for I have found an exemplary tablet that conforms to my adorable self. [*Music.*] Plum Blossom mother, to you whom I find late in life, my speech choked with tears, my heart weary with long suffering, I kneel.

[*Property man takes bamboo pole from wall left, crosses to right of* Chorus' *table and stands with back to the audience — holding pole in perpendicular position.*]

Chorus. 'T is a celestial weeping-willow tree.

[Plum Blossom *enters left, crosses to center at back and stands just below pole, with fan over her face.*]

Chorus. The maiden peeps from the shadow of the tree at the youth of her fancy.

[*Music stops.*]

Moy Fah Loy. Who kneels at the tablets of my Plum Blossom mother?

Wu Hoo Git. An august child just born to her. What fairy of beauty crosses my prayer! A princess in dress and carriage, a lily foot. Light radiates from her person and shines through her garments. Raise your fan to me.

Moy Fah Loy. [*In surprise does so. Then covers her face again.*] I did not mean to do it. [*To audience.*] 'T is he of the kite hill.

Wu Hoo Git. Painted banner of love! You fill the pockets of my eyes with graciousness. I like you. I wish that you were buried here that I might take you to motherhood.

Moy Fah Loy. It is my mother that lies there, and I came to burn incense at her tablets.

Wu Hoo Git. [*Rises, goes up to her.*] I will assist your honorable hands.

Moy Fah Loy. It is most unholy to speak to a man —

Wu Hoo Git. At the grave of our exalted mother?

Moy Fah Loy. I like your voice. It is sweet. [*She sits stool center. Property man crosses left and places pole against wall left and then sits.*] I will be unholy while See Noi, my maid, yonder in the flowery path prays to her mother's ashes and sees me not.

Wu Hoo Git. I selected the right mother.

Moy Fah Loy. Then she is not your real honorable mother?

Wu Hoo Git. I liked her name and thought she would be an honorable mother. I needed one.

Moy Fah Loy. I am glad you chose her. I could n't have spoken to you if you had not been one of our sublime family.

[*Peeps at him through fan.*]

Wu Hoo Git. I can behold with my eyes your celestial heart through the lattice of your fan.

Moy Fah Loy. How wonderful you are! The openings are so small for you to peep through and my heart is so augustly large.

Wu Hoo Git. I know the august woman heart. I have traveled the road of pleasure. I have sailed on the flowery sea of sin.

[*Crosses to right.*]

Moy Fah Loy. How enchanting! You walk like an emperor. [*He stops walking.*] Walk for me.

Wu Hoo Git. I walk. [*Moves several steps toward her.*] How old are you? You must be forty, you are so beautiful and wise.

Moy Fah Loy [*tapping her fan*]. Walk.

Wu Hoo Git. I walk. [*Crosses to left.*]

Moy Fah Loy. Walk with your vener-

able footsteps nearer, that I may see you through my fan. [*He turns toward her.*] Not with your eyes fixed upon me, but your head held high in majesty.

WU HOO GIT. I should walk into your eyes and lips.

MOY FAH LOY. Then I could not use them.

WU HOO GIT. There is a way. [*Kneeling left of her.*] I have learned it.

MOY FAH LOY. From another maiden? [*Turns her back on him.*] I do not know augustly why, but I do not like that.

WU HOO GIT. I will teach you.

MOY FAH LOY. Then I shall have traveled the flowery paths just as far as you. [*Turns to him again.*]

WU HOO GIT. Augustly deign to place your eyes this way. I would have celestially sworn that I had measured the depths and heights of joy; I only stood on the rim of the false jade cup till I looked into your eyes.

MOY FAH LOY [*drawing away from him slowly*]. We are forgetting our mother.

WU HOO GIT. I have a thought. [*Rises.*] If you are my sister and I am your brother, I had better adopt another mother.

MOY FAH LOY. Tell me why?

WU HOO GIT. We cannot love unless you will be my mother-wife.

MOY FAH LOY. What shall we do? I am on the threshold of betrothal.

WU HOO GIT. Then I renounce our mother and will contend with him who seeks your hand.

MOY FAH LOY. [*Rises. Smiling.*] Let us augustly kneel and burn incense and pray to find a way.

[*They kneel before chair number one, left.*]

SEE NOI. [*Enters door left, crosses to right at back and down right.*] Moy Fah Loy, Plum Blossom; do my eyes deceive me! On her knees with a man, and she was left in my exalted care!

MOY FAH LOY. Is that you, See Noi? I was engrossed in prayer.

SEE NOI. [*Crosses to* PLUM BLOSSOM.] All the prayers of all the gods and all the world burned up in an incense pot could not save you now. [*Takes her by the arm. Pulls her to right center.*] You are ruined. You have spoken to a man!

MOY FAH LOY. He is my brother.

SEE NOI. Impossible! I knew your mother.

MOY FAH LOY. He has adopted my mother. He had none, so I gave him half of mine. You taught me charities. [*Assistant removes two tablets from chair left of stool center, rolls them and wakes property man to give them to him. Then takes second chair left and places it up left, back to audience. The other chair left of stool he removes to wall left.*] Half my mother was all I had to give.

SEE NOI. Evil spirits have you. Your maiden modesty has flown. You have talked with a man!

WU HOO GIT. I will marry her, for she is good.

SEE NOI. Plum Blossom, daughter of Tai Char Shoong, marry a man without a mother! The maiden bloom of her cheek you have brushed away. You have blighted the fruit of her usefulness. Her father will behead me for this dishonor.

WU HOO GIT. I will make her happier than a father could.

SEE NOI. Your doors are not opposite. Your wealth cannot match hers. You have no mother and are unequal. Home, I say! [*Takes* PLUM BLOSSOM *up to door right, sobbing.*] And see my gray head pay the price your shamed virtue brings upon your father's house.

MOY FAH LOY. I must be very wicked.

[*They exeunt.* SEE NOI *crying. Property man picks up red cushion and places it left, near property box.*]

WU HOO GIT. [*Follows up to door and turns.*] If I am to believe my eyes, I have lost true love. Shadows encircle me. Who are you, the rapping of whose bamboo stick, tapping its way hither in measured tread, encroaches on my silence?

[*Enter door left,* MAUN GUNG, *blind fortune-teller, accompanied by rapping on wood block in orchestra. Down left, crosses and up right before speaking. Carries long bamboo stick, which he raps on*

stage, still accompanied by wood block in the orchestra.]

MAUN GUNG. The blinds of darkness have been drawn across the windows of my head. I see not. I am a beggar; the past, the present and the future parade before me. I know all.

WU HOO GIT. How can you know when you cannot see?

MAUN GUNG. Let your kindness loose its purse-string to help me on my stumbling way and I will tell.

WU HOO GIT. [*Gives money.*] How know you life with holes for eyes?

MAUN GUNG. I look within. There lies all there is to know.

WU HOO GIT. Then you are not a prophet of the days to come?

MAUN GUNG. I read the days to come by the light of the days that have gone. My brain sights travel the ghostly ways of memory. What a man was, he is; and what he is, he will be. A fool can prophesy.

WU HOO GIT. Know you the year and moon of my birth?

MAUN GUNG. Not so, for your birthday was the death day of what you were before.

WU HOO GIT. Was I born rich or poor?

MAUN GUNG. You were born rich, for your mind is rich and that is all.

WU HOO GIT. Whom seek I?

MAUN GUNG. You have a youthful voice, therefore warm blood is in your veins. You seek your love-mate.

WU HOO GIT. And will she come to me?

MAUN GUNG. If you pray to your venerated ancestors to guide her right.

WU HOO GIT [*fearfully.*] And if I have no ancestors?

MAUN GUNG [*raising stick*]. Even my bamboo has its celestial shadow and, if you have no ancestors, you are an unwanted soul cast back on the shores of earth to starve of joy.

WU HOO GIT. Speak not so! I will not hear it.

MAUN GUNG. You like not the truth.

WU HOO GIT [*angrily*]. I will send you to your ancestors to plead for me.

MAUN GUNG. I cannot plead to them. I will live forever there, but will not know my neighbors. Learn for yourself, as I have. [*Exits, tapping cane, door right.*]

WU HOO GIT. Stay, tell me more! He goes from me as all have done in the world. Everything I touch turns to blackness in my hand. [*Property man stands on chair up left with bamboo pole and silk cord with noose.*] I behold a weeping willow. I shall die on its branch, then my love will be sorry. I will find my ancestors.

[*Stands on stool center. Props lower pole. He puts noose around his neck. Then jumps off stool.*]

CHORUS. He hangs himself, but fear not, the spirit of his mother watches over him, and will send a wayfarer who will cut him down.

[*Enter* GIT HOK GAR *left, crosses down left. Sees* WU HOO GIT *and backs away to left. Large gong. He then turns to property man, who holds out sword to him. He takes it and cuts at cord.*]

WU HOO GIT. Who are you that would take from me the joy of compelling the world to miss me?

GIT HOK GAR. The world laughs when there is one less mouth to feed. If you would make the world respect you, stay and fight it.

WU HOO GIT. [*Takes off noose. Rubs throat.*] I prefer my celestial breath.

GIT HOK GAR. Dying hurts unnecessarily. [*Property man grabs sword from him and puts it in box, then places pole against wall left.* GIT HOK GAR *turns and looks at him. Assistant crosses to right and removes tablets from chairs and places them in box left. Turning to* WU HOO GIT.] You are too young to seek death. What leads you to this making off?

WU HOO GIT. The loss of a love that encircles my life like a star light-ringed.

GIT HOK GAR. To enjoy love you must enjoy life.

WU HOO GIT. I am a worldless man. Even at the threshold of my days — I am shameful. I have no shadows, no ancestors to bring a blessing to my love.

GIT HOK GAR. Have you no home?

WU HOO GIT. My father and mother are foster.

GIT HOK GAR. Then you owe them more than those who, in giving you life, had a duty toward you. Home! You are rich in mind, which is all. [*Crosses up right.*]

WU HOO GIT. But the circle about my heart. My love ring!

GIT HOK GAR. Make yourself great in right living and your ancestors will find you. Cheerful, my boy, I will lead you to your home and my gray head will find you life and love, which I missed for want of guiding. Come! To your home!

[*They exeunt right. Property man's assistant removes one chair to wall right. The other he places against* CHORUS' *table and another assistant takes stool from center and places it against the chair and below it. Property man then places sword on it, dusting it first.*]

CHORUS. 'T is again the house of Lee Sin, the farmer. [*Music.*]

SUEY SIN FAH. [*Enters left, followed by* LEE SIN. *They come down left, open imaginary door, step over the sill.* LEE SIN *closes the door.*] Will he never come, Lee Sin?

LEE SIN. When he has learned the world.

SUEY SIN FAH. He has forgotten us.

LEE SIN. My majestic ox does not forget the stall where he is fed.

[*Crosses to right. Music.*]

WU HOO GIT. [*Enters with* GIT HOK GAR]. My home, the door.

GIT HOK GAR [*left of him*]. Enter bravely and make amends.

WU HOO GIT. I am ashamed. You go first.

GIT HOK GAR. [*Raps an imaginary door. Opens door. Enters.*] I am Git Hok Gar, philosopher. Have you a son?

SUEY SIN FAH. Not dead!

GIT HOK GAR. He is at your threshold seeking forgiveness.

WU HOO GIT. [*Enters imaginary door.*] May I enter?

SUEY SIN FAH. Wu Hoo Git, my boy, my Wu Hoo Git!

[*Embraces him, weeping.* GIT HOK GAR *moves up right.*]

WU HOO GIT. I choke! [*Crosses to center.*] How are the august rice fields, the loom and the ox?

SUEY SIN FAH. You have not forgotten them?

WU HOO GIT. I am learning to remember, for memory comes with love, and I have met one who lit the enchanting candle in my heart. Her lips are flower buds that open with delight at the warmth of my superb kisses, but even as my day broke with a roseate dawn, a despair cloud crossed the sky, and death hovered in my path. I have no ancestors.

SUEY SIN FAH. My poor boy!

WU HOO GIT. Pity me not. Manliness sneers at pity. Open the door of knowledge to me. Who are my ancestors?

LEE SIN. They are —

SUEY SIN FAH. No! No!

LEE SIN. I will tell!

SUEY SIN FAH. It will cost us his life and yours.

LEE SIN. I care not. [*Crosses to* WU HOO GIT. TAI CHAR SHOONG *enters dragging* PLUM BLOSSOM *by the hand.*] I murdered for love of you. What must our boy suffer for love! Your father was —

TAI CHAR SHOONG. [*Who has come down left.*] Dwells Wu Hoo Git here?

WU HOO GIT. I am the august Wu Hit Git. Who are you that break upon us like an angry sea?

TAI CHAR SHOONG. Father of the glorious Plum Blosson, whom you betrayed.

WU HOO GIT. I found your celestial daughter at the tablets of her mother. She was pure and beautiful and I loved her.

MOY FAH LOY. And I loved him.

TAI CHAR SHOONG. [*To* WU HOO GIT.] Your days are numbered.

WU HOO GIT. Not by the count of man.

TAI CHAR SHOONG. But by a father's count.

WU HOO GIT. I will marry her, and make her mine.

TAI CHAR SHOONG. You, without ancestors!

SUEY SIN FAH. Season your anger while I speak! To your knees, Wu Hoo Git, and receive your sacred heritage. [*He kneels, back to audience.*] Raise your eyes heavenward. [*She takes out baby jacket with Chinese letters on it.*] Your mother now speaks.

Wu Hoo Git. My mother!

Suey Sin Fah [*showing him the baby jacket*]. Each blood-stain from this baby jacket is the history of your being and breathes a mother's blessing.

Wu Hoo Git. My soul! — my mother!

Suey Sin Fah. These lines are too sacred for me to voice. Your lips alone must form the words.

Wu Hoo Git. My eyes are choked with tears. Breathe my mother's name.

Suey Sin Fah. Chee Moo, the beautiful!

Wu Hoo Git. Chee Moo! I feel her a little above my head.

Lee Sin. And your father —

Wu Hoo Git. My father! The highway of too much joy opens to my famished soul.

Lee Sin. Wu Sin Yin, the Great.

Wu Hoo Git. The Great!

Tai Char Shoong. If this were true, Wu Hoo Git would rule this province where the Daffodil, son of Wu Sin Yin, the Great, now sits in splendor.

Wu Hoo Git. My mother crowns me with a truth cloud. I will prove her air message for her I love.

Tai Char Shoong. I believe you not! Make your boasting words realities and Plum Blossom is yours.

Wu Hoo Git. And so I will. But what have I to guard the way of life?

Lee Sin. [*Who has taken sword from chair up center now comes down.*] This sword of courage.

[*Gives sword to* Wu Hoo Git *and steps back a little.*]

Suey Sin Fah. [*Gives baby jacket.*] And this guiding star of a mother's love to armor him.

Wu Hoo Git. A mother's love!

Moy Fah Loy [*crossing to center*]. Make a prayer each day big enough to match it and I will do so, too.

[Suey Sin Fah *and* Lee Sin *retire up stage right.*]

Wu Hoo Git. I will write your name on my hand-palms that everything I touch and feel will be Plum Blossom. I may never clasp my home and heart again. Let me mingle my breath with yours.

Git Hok Gar [*crossing to left*]. You are already breathing the harshness of the world. You must fulfil the life for which your mother died. [*Two assistant property men with chariot banners enter door left and stand each side of it.*] A stern way is licking your feet. Come! Your glorious chariot awaits you.

Wu Hoo Git. [*Rising. Crosses to* Git Hok Gar *left.*] Carry I naught away with me but honorable memories and leave all behind me at this doorway of farewells?

Moy Fah Loy. [*Crosses to center.*] Yes, one part of me you take. My way shall be crippled till your return, then restore it to me.

Wu Hoo Git. Speak the joy you have in store for me.

Moy Fah Loy. [*Takes off slipper.*] My slipper! Let it bide next your heart on your weary way. In the hour of frightful necessity shake it and I will come to you.

[*Gives it to him.*]

Wu Hoo Git. What do you meantime without your august slipper?

Moy Fah Loy. Stand on one leg like a bird.

Wu Hoo Git. On one leg like an august bird! [*Kisses* Plum Blossom.]

Suey Sin Fah. Wu Hoo Git! [*Music.*]

Git Hok Gar. Come! Mount!

[Git Hok Gar *goes up and stands between by the chariot banners.*]

Wu Hoo Git. I go to seek my heritage.

[*They start across the stage, accompanied by the chariot banners.* Plum Blossom *hops on one foot and stands on chair up center, waving farewell.*]

Lee Sin. Courage, my boy! Courage!

[*They go to right, then up stage and turn near door.*]

Wu Hoo Git. Farewell!

[*Holding slipper up in the air.*]

TABLEAU CURTAIN

Chorus [*appearing through opening in tableau curtain and bowing*]. I bow in personal appreciation of your approval, if truly manifest, of my Wu Hoo Git, upon whom my fancy will now bestow the Yellow Jacket and the Peacock Feather. I speak in the first person, for I am accustomed to

adulation, and it does not in the least discompose me. My brothers of the Pear Tree Garden are far otherwise; a little flattery upsets their modest equipoise. While there may be those who desire to secure the credit or discredit, I will say, — your generosity forces me to admit it, — I wrote this play — a mere trifle. I composed the music, too. I taught them the story of my grandiloquent imagination. I showed them where to walk, how to talk. In my august fancy I painted the scenes. My menial, the property man, at my august celestial suggestion, will now give them thunder-clouds and snow-storms to assist their meager interpretation. The play is mine, the acting virtually mine. Such remuneration as you have bestowed upon us by your gracious patronage, I accept. Such sums as I may deem necessary I shall pass on to my brothers. At the end of the play you may call them before you if you like. It will please me, and praise them sparingly, but of course, I shall know that you know that the celestial thought was wholly and modestly mine. I bow. [*Exits.*]

CURTAIN

ACT III

After house curtain is raised property man comes before tableau curtains, walks back and forth across stage, beating large gong. As he exits behind the curtains, orchestra on stage begins to play. At crash of cymbals CHORUS *comes before tableau curtains.*

CHORUS. I still observe my honorable way and come to you, making my words brief and less august at each superb presentation of myself, for the more my brothers have to say the less need I. The second father-in-law, Tai Fah Min, though dead, still lives in spirit to retard Wu Hoo Git's august progress. But, forget not that our hero is older and augustly wiser. Having wearied of rice wine and song girls, he now approaches the portals of celestial philosophy. All men approach the godlike realms of thoughtful sufficiency after the bodily attainments wane. I bow. [*Turns back to audience and at gesture with his fan tableau curtains are drawn. Walks to his table, center, as music is played, before speaking. Four stools have been placed across stage center, spaces between them. Property man discovered sitting on stool right center. When* CHORUS *gets to table he rises and indicates the scene.*] The Daffodil takes his steps among his mulberry bushes, watching the silkworms spin while he threads his brain with evil.

[*Music continues.* DAFFODIL *enters, comes to stool, left center, does business of smelling imaginary bushes, then goes to center. Property man brings flowers for him to smell, — which he waves aside scornfully. Property man returns flowers to box left and then crosses to right at back and stands at upper end of drapery, which is hung to form a screen about a chair placed upon a table against wall right and represents the* DAFFODIL'S *palace. Piano during speech.*]

WU FAH DIN. I apologize for the apparent inadequacy of my brain against Wu Hoo Git's brawn. I am as disappointed as you are that I have not been able to kill this young Wu Hoo Git. Bear with me, however, for I will eventually do so. Wu Hoo Git not only lives, but starts on a journey to take my place in life and despatch me. Such a result would be deplorable, as you know. I had with my kindness of nature planned for him a gently lingering death. I must now unkindly kill him outright, for your entertainment. I must be most careful in so doing, for, if I kill him, despising brute force as I do, my subjects, who should be his subjects, would immortalize him and the truth would come out. I have discovered some truths also about myself which I prefer not to have known. I shall retire to my palace. [*Indicates it and moves up right. Property man dusts drapery*] and on my cushioned throne, watch from its battlements. [*Ascends throne. Screened by drapery.*] I invoke all the subtle forces of my brain against Wu Hoo Git's brawn. I will impede his journey toward my person and my throne. I will throw death evils in his pathway. I will place before him a lofty mountain peak — that

he may exhaust himself in climbing over it. I direct the battle with my fan.

[*Disappears behind drapery. Property man's assistants move two tables from left. Place them center, touching each other, and put two stools which are now underneath the tables on top of them. Property man crosses right, below tables, and stands at upper end of them.*]

CHORUS. 'T is a lofty mountain peak.

[*Property man rests elbow on upper stool and puts head in his hands.*]

[*Enter* WU HOO GIT *and* GIT HOK GAR. *Music.*]

WU HOO GIT. [*Crosses to center, below table.*] Show me the battle-ground. Must I contend here, or shall I wander farther?

GIT HOK GAR [*left*]. No man can foresee his battle-ground. Every shadow or darkening cloud may bring him peril. The way grows long. Think, my boy.

WU HOO GIT [*crossing to* GIT HOK GAR]. I can think when I am dead. Love quickens my desire for triumphant vengeance, that I may conquer all, secure my throne, and place Plum Blossom on a seat of love beside me.]

GIT HOK GAR [*turning, looks at imaginary mountain, center*]. What! Must we drag ourselves over another mountain, with its ragged roof?

WU HOO GIT. I shall o'ertop them all, for nothing shall stay my progress. [*Climbs to top of stools on table, center, assisting himself by holding imaginary branches. Then helps* GIT HOK GAR *to mount table.*] From the o'ertopping view I see the tiled roof where bides Plum Blossom. I see my home, too, and peacefulness behind me.

GIT HOK GAR. And before you monsters, terrors and murder to overcome.

WU HOO GIT. I care not, for all my tasks now are born of love. Come on! [*Starts to descend from table. As he places foot on stool right of table, cymbals crash.*] I feel a hand of ice encircling my sublime leg.

GIT HOK GAR. It is an evil stream spirit that would drag you in. Cleave it with your fiery sword.

WU HOO GIT. I would desperately cleave [*starts to draw sword*], but it is gone. [*Turning to* GIT HOK GAR, *smiling.*] It overheard my solemn thought. You can crush enemies and friends with the weight of the tongue.

[*Descends to stage, assists* GIT HOK GAR *to descend and they exeunt right. Music. Property man's assistant takes one table and stool and moves it left. Another removes the far table and stool to left.*]

WU FAH DIN. [*Appears above drapery.*] He is such an impetuous youth, is he not? See how madly he is rushing into the dangers I am preparing for him. His climbing of that mountain was a mere exhibition of brawn. I will confront him with the raging torrent.

[*Retires behind drapery. Property man crosses to right, picks up end of plank which lies below the two stools. Assistant picks up left end of plank. As they place it on stools property man pretends to have hurt his finger. Another assistant looks at it sympathetically. Property man indicates scene and they retire to left.*]

CHORUS. 'T is a wayward river and bridge.

WU FAH DIN. [*Rises behind drapery.*] Bridge! Bridge! I had hopes of this river, but my gentle mind overlooked the bridge. However, it may be a weak bridge.

[*Retires behind drapery.* WU HOO GIT *and* GIT HOK GAR *enter door left. Music for entrance. They come to left center.*]

GIT HOK GAR. Water confronts us.

WU HOO GIT. But see, a span of thoughtful kindness awaits us.

GIT HOK GAR. The chasm is so deep and chill and the way across so narrow. Let us go about and find a safer crossing.

[*He crosses down to extreme left.*]

WU HOO GIT. Come on! It has been left us by brave souls who have passed before.

GIT HOK GAR. So in all journeys in life,

bridges have been built by those who left their deeds behind them.

Wu Hoo Git. Armored with courage, I draw my sword of progress! The end will never be seen if my first footfall weakens. [*Steps on bridge from left. Falls to his knee.*] I stumble to my knee.

Git Hok Gar. The gods would make you humble at starting.

Wu Hoo Git. A silent prayer to the baby-mother message. [*He prayerfully kisses garment.*] Behold! The spirits are satisfied. They rock us not. [Git Hok Gar *mounts bridge from left.*] In the water, mirrored below, I see a face like my own. It has lines of evil in it.

Git Hok Gar. The serpent lines of your father's face crawl in yours by reflection.

Wu Hoo Git. Is my face a snake's nest? What must I do to cleanse it?

Git Hok Gar. Bathe it in the sunshine of virtue.

Wu Hoo Git. Behold! over my father's shoulder grins the fox's face again that molests my sight.

Git Hok Gar. It is Tai Fah Min, who gloats at your struggle to be free from the curse of a father's crime.

Wu Hoo Git. What shall I do?

Git Hok Gar. Purify your soul and he will flee with the snake face.

Wu Hoo Git. In the mirror of the sublime water I now behold precipices, depths, valleys, snow-encircled peaks! Birds swim in the pearly air below the clouds like fishes in the clear stream beneath. The fox face again molests my sight! I will consult my garment of direction. [*Observing garment again.*] The lines trickle toward the eastern path at the bridge's end, with mother blood drops larger to indicate the way. Come on! For Plum Blossom I conquer on earth and in Heaven. [*Gets off bridge to right.*]

Git Hok Gar [*following him*]. My brave boy. We step upon a tiny peak of yellow rock.

[*Music. They exeunt right. Property man and assistant remove stools and plank, leaving stage clear.*]

Wu Fah Din [*appears*]. It is useless for me to tell you of the fear in his heart as he crossed that bridge. He was continually calling out for a woman. I will throw an inky darkness in his path, that it may affright him. [*Retires behind drapery.*]

Chorus. 'T is a thunder-cloud.

[*Music.* Loy Gong *enters door right, stamps around in a circle just inside door, finishing, right center.*]

Wu Hoo Git. [*Enters door left with* Git Hok Gar. *Comes to left center.*] Who are you that impedes my way with clamorous noise?

Loy Gong. I am Loy Gong, the God of Thunder, requested by a world-power to o'ershadow you. I keep mortal aspirations down for the other gods through bellowing fear.

[*Hits standard with hammer. Cymbals.*]

Wu Hoo Git. But I fear you not. My wisdom buds with courage, impregnable to gods and man, and teaches me that every word-might or heavenly power has one still higher before whom it quails — called love.

Loy Gong. And what is love?

Wu Hoo Git. For me, Plum Blossom.

Loy Gong. And what flower fear I when the floor of Heaven bends beneath my tread?

Wu Hoo Git. The skyflower — the august rainbow of good thoughts and deeds! [Loy Gong *drops hammer.*] Before its seven light-rays you crouch in silence.

Loy Gong [*fearfully*]. I would fill your purse, to keep my secret, for if my weakness were known to man, I should lose my solemn fearfulness.

Wu Hoo Git [*with contempt*]. My wisdom cannot be purchased.

Loy Gong. I will welcome you on my icy peaks and whisper music to you.

Wu Hoo Git. When I arrive on your august peaks, I care not what tones you take, for I shall have within my veins the warmth of Plum Blossom's love.

Loy Gong. [*Goes toward door right.*] I withdraw my august self in fearfulness of music. [*Exits door right. Music.*]

Git Hok Gar. [*Crosses to* Wu Hoo Git, *center.*] You have met the most fearful of the gods and vanquished him.

WU HOO GIT. Give me the earth to conquer, that the earth may no longer deny me my heritage and my Plum Blossom's love.

[*End of speech in doorway. Exeunt right.*]

WU FAH DIN. [*Appears.*] This makes me decidedly uncomfortable. What tripping potency has he to overcome a god? Can it be that he is coupling brain with brawn? My seat of dignity rocks in fearfulness. Let Kom Loi ensnare and slay him.

[*Property man brings a large web made of gold string which is tied on a framework of wood with thread and sets it up, right, leaning sleepily against it.*]

[*Enter* KOM LOI, *as Spider, and takes position back of web, right.*]

CHORUS. 'T is a golden spider-web.

WOO HU GIT. [*Entering left with* GIT HOK GAR, *crosses to right, stops in front of web.*] What is this tangled mesh that stretches from earth to Heaven and pretends to bar my way with petty entanglements? My celestial curiosity leads me to inquire.

KOM LOI. I beckon your sublime presence.

WU HOO GIT. It invites me with a gentle voice. I am led to desire a closer view.

KOM LOI. Let me encircle you with the beauties and love-knots of friendship.

WU HOO GIT. Its voice is as gentle as Plum Blossom's. It must be my friend. [*Peeps.*] I see but indistinctly through the fluttering weave of rainbow lights the faces of Wu Sin Yin and Tai Fah Min directing malice. I will observe more closely.

[*Wets finger and makes slit in web.*]

KOM LOI. [*Enraged voice.*] Beware! I asked you to enter my abode as a friend. You stick your finger in the eye of my hospitality. Beware!

WU HOO GIT [*looking up*]. An august Spider and his enchanting web!

[*Frightened.*]

GIT HOK GAR. The thing is dangerous and I am a man of peace. I will depart my footsteps to the other side of the mountain.

[*Picks up chair, crosses left, sits facing left.*]

WU HOO GIT. [*To* SPIDER.] I repent my fault.

KOM LOI. Repentance may help your soul, but will not reweave the strands in which I catch human flies that would know my lair. You shall die.

[SPIDER *bursts forth and throws silken strands.*]

WU HOO GIT [*frightened*]. It is an evil thing that has entangled me for vice of curiosity.

KOM LOI. Beware!

WU HOO GIT. I am in the Spider's eyes — a web of light dances 'twixt his demon seeing-sockets and mine. It is an august new power that holds me fast. I must use my sublime brain, for the spider has not my sublime brain. I possess a celestial thought. I will cut with my sword the eye-chain that binds me to the monster. I cut with my impressive sword. [*Starts back.*] I am free to meet him now — man to Spider! [SPIDER *throws out silk ribbon rolls from web.*] He spits witch daggers at me, to destroy my love and life. I augustly sever them. I observe I am celestially his unequal match. [SPIDER *throws more silk strands at him, furnished by property man. He cuts them at first. Finally he becomes tied up in many strands and falls.*] I am woven in the web of evil. My sword hacks but cuts not. The web dulls its fiery edge. I am being tied to the earth rocks! I have a thought. I will call Plum Blossom. I will shake the slipper. [*Shakes slipper.*] Moy Fah Loy, Moy Fah Loy, save me!

MOY FAH LOY. [*Enters door to Heaven, center, above as a disembodied spirit.* KOM LOI *attempts to throw more ribbons, but is stopped by* PLUM BLOSSOM'S *voice.*] The slipper shook. The earth stood still. The winds blew me here. I command the demon Spider to depart.

KOM LOI. [*Makes another attempt to throw ribbons — stops with arm in mid-air.*] My web spins not. My joints crinkle in the light of purity. I seek the dark.

[*Exits door right, stepping through web. Music. Property man removes frame, gathers up silk strands, takes them off, door right.*]

Wu Hoo Git. [*Proudly. Down left.*] The strands about me melt in celestial light. The Spider withers before my exalted gaze. I feel in my expanding soul the power to o'ercome all monsters wild. I would that Plum Blossom might see my unaided triumph. She would adore my fiery bravery.

Moy Fah Loy. Moy Fah Loy sees all and knows all. [*Music.*]

Wu Hoo Git. [*Crosses to center, listening.*] Plum Blossom's rippling voice, yet I behold her not.

Moy Fah Loy. I am the disembodied soul of her you loved so constantly, permitted for a moment only with heavenly vision to behold you.

Wu Hoo Git. [*Sees her.*]. Wherefore do you approach me on the steps of Heaven? Why does a dazzling halo of light gloriously encircle you like dew-drops on a star? What evil one has snatched you from the flower paths of earth, where you were sublimely mine, to place you beyond my human ecstasy? I shall know; and, if it be one of earth, my sword shall avenge our parting; if it be one who has passed beyond, my pursuing spirit shall follow him and knife him with the blasts of anguish.

[*Crosses up to right center.*]

Moy Fah Loy. You shook the slipper and I came in your hour of need.

Wu Hoo Git. I shook it that you might behold my hour of august victory. Alone, I vanquished the beast of the fields. [*Property man and assistant bring table on which are two stools to center.* Wu Hoo Git *takes one stool, places it right, at table, the other stool remaining on table.*] I will build a mountain that shall kiss high Heaven, and on the top of it I will cone ten thousand thousand peaks till, topping the highest with my dainty foot, you palpitate within my august arms.

Moy Fah Loy. We palpitate not in Heaven.

Wu Hoo Git. Despite the terror of your thought, I ascend.

[*Climbs on table impulsively.*]

Moy Fah Loy. Ascend not, for all men who strive to build a Heaven ladder and know the secrets of the gods have met with defeat and punishment.

Wu Hoo Git. But my ladder is love-woven and each rung is a love strand upon which the humblest may tiptoe to Heaven.

Moy Fah Loy. But it must be born of love you know not of. My prayers alone must guide you, not myself.

Wu Hoo Git. [*Climbs to top of chair on table, back to audience. Music.*] I would place the kiss of august victory upon your painted lips.

Moy Fah Loy. I have no lips.

Wu Hoo Git. I would take you in my glorious arms that your heart might impress your hero's heart.

Moy Fah Loy. I have no heart.

Wu Hoo Git. But stand you not on venerable legs?

Moy Fah Loy. I stand on thinnest air. I have no legs.

Wu Hoo Git. No legs in Heaven! Then you are false to me and unworthy of my glorious victory.

Moy Fah Loy. I know not arms, nor legs, nor kisses. I left my body at home for my celestial father, Tai Char Shoong, to guard till your return.

Wu Hoo Git. [*Turns on stool facing audience.*] It was an august oversight. You should have brought your impressive body with you. I descend from Heaven.

[*Climbs down right of table.*]

Moy Fah Loy. I go and leave you to your august way.

Wu Hoo Git. Stay but a little. Give me some exchange of sweetness, my rose of Heaven.

[*Property man takes stool off table and places it left. Music stops.*]

Moy Fah Loy. The small space of time I have to encourage you is spent. I can tarry but a breath time, then breathe myself away.

Wu Hoo Git. Then float guiding on, in your cloud-like boat to inspire my aching heart, and I will follow, till the world is mine and nothing left to conquer.

Moy Fah Loy. I can but leave the promise of fragrance to come, for the petals of my love are not yet full blown to answer you. The zephyr-wagon blows homeward and I must ride with it or lose my way. Farewell!

Wu Hoo Git. Stay! Stay! Love is never lost for heroism is born of it.

Moy Fah Loy. Love is in the heart when far away.

Wu Hoo Git. Love is in the heart, always. When next you come forget not to bring your exalted lips.

Moy Fah Loy. I shall augustly remember, for I observe man knows not woman without her lips. I depart for my body.

[*She exits upper door center. Music.* Wu Hoo Git *mounts stool right of table, holds out his arms toward* Moy Fah Loy, *then turns to* Git Hok Gar *who has crossed to upper left-hand corner of table.*]

Git Hok Gar. I observe your eyes roll with unfalling tears, your lips are heavy with undelivered kisses of farewell.

Wu Hoo Git. There is no place to remove them. [*Comes down center.*] Give me back my Moy Fah Loy, even in spirit.

Git Hok Gar. [*Left center.*] Experience and years only can know spirit love.

Wu Hoo Git. We must climb still higher into the golden way. I would fear to meet more elements, if it were not that I had embraced disembodied Plum Blossom and know that nothing can harm me now.

[*Exeunt door right. Assistant property man removes table and stool to left.*]

Wu Fah Din. [*Appears above drapery. Watches them off.*] I surmised not he had a slipper. It is a most dangerous potency to overcome. It upsets my plans frightfully. I must contrive a way to get it. What barks? [*Terror.*] I summoned nothing of this nature. Can it be Wu Hoo Git has sent this monster after me while I was cogitating his destruction? [*To* Attendant *below.*] Ask who it is? Speak to it boldly or I will toss you at it bodily.

Attendant. [*Hesitates.*] Who are you?

Tai Fah Min [*with fox head on*]. You may not know me in this guise, but I am a fox spirit, and being a fox, I have changed my form, so fear not. My brain is the brain of Tai Fah Min, the second father-in-law of Wu Sin Yin, and so your grandfather. I come to help you to wreak mischief on Wu Hoo Git. I might have accomplished all of my iniquity but death came along and took me. The gods were kind, however, and on my path to the spirit world I stumbled on a fox body, unused some days by the departed fox, and sublimely climbed into it. So I was released from an abode in the depths to prowl and help you in your mischief on Wu Hoo Git. I shall hinder him of success; if my tail be not cut off in the bloody encounter which must ensue I shall do him murder. He shall perish and then you rule unmolested. [*He struts up stage.*] I will take on a frightful shape. I can swim, I can run. He shall not escape me. I have a reason; I have a tail.

[*Exits right.*]

Wu Fah Din [*exultantly*]. I have cause to be proud of my ancestors. I banish trembling fear and all kindness from my heart. The traditions of my family attend upon my wisdom. My grandfather is here to aid me. With such mighty strength, my bloody contention is no longer wit against wit, brawn against brawn; for I meet him with all the venom of my heritage. I have him now.

Wu Hoo Git. [*Enters with* Git Hok Gar *left.*] But tell me. When you trod this path in youth did such things impede your way?

Git Hok Gar. No, I had none to envy me, but you are born to opposition because of the rights you seek.

[*Down left. Messenger enters to* Daffodil *with red papers up right.*]

Wu Fah Din. Now for the slipper and his death! My message is from my grandfather, who you know is Tai Fah Min. You will see what a terrible shape he will assume. Prepare your flowery handkerchiefs for the flood of tears which you will shed at the death of Wu Hoo Git.

[*Horrible monster tiger enters down right, assisted by property man, who lights fuse in nostrils and dusts head, which conceals* Tai Fah Min. *Its body is supported by an assistant inside.*]

Wu Hoo Git. What monster approaches me — with lightning orbs, thunder voice, and meandering gait of horror? Bring him

nearer that I may pierce his armor with my flashing eyes!

GIT HOK GAR. [*Fearfully. Crosses center to tiger.*] It is the tiger-father of all tigers! Its claws dig graves. [*Roar from tiger.*]

WU HOO GIT. What language speaks it? I understand it not.

GIT HOK GAR. It is the language of death. [*Urges* WU HOO GIT *back.*] I am old and must perish soon. You are young, so run!

WU HOO GIT. Not I. [*Crosses to center.*] I shall augustly sever it to crown my love with victory. [*Tiger roars.*]

GIT HOK GAR. It thunders answer. Flee!

WU HOO GIT. Not I. [*Moves down front and around tiger, which crosses to center. Dismembers body with sword. Assistant runs.*] The head runs without legs. I like it not.

TAI FAH MIN. [*Within tiger's head.*] I have you now. Crumble before my bark; shriek at my snap; die at my bite. I am Tai Fah Min.

WU HOO GIT. Who conspired with my father, Wu Sin Yin, to depart my beloved mother, Chee Moo.

TAI FAH MIN. I assault you with my teeth. I would gloriously chew you and honorably digest you, for, while you live, you menace the glorious future of my daughter's child.

[*They fight. Cymbals, drums, etc.*]

WU HOO GIT. I chop your throat. I cut it with fiery blade from ear to ear.

TAI FAH MIN. I mind it not.

GIT HOK GAR. It is invulnerable. It is a fox.

WU HOO GIT. I augustly neglected the thought. I will sever its tail.

[*Cuts off tail and stamps on it.*]

TAI FAH MIN. [*Falls.*] I am undone without my brush. 'T is murder most unkind.

WU HOO GIT [*proudly*]. Kind or unkind, I contemptuously tread upon it with my sublime foot.

[*Music. Property man places ladder center.*]

GIT HOK GAR. [*Crosses to above fox, lying on floor center in tiger skin.*] Know, unhappy fox spirit, this glorious boy, seeking vengeance for a mother, places you in a clean soul dress at Heaven's threshold in return for your unwonted crimes. You should die in thankfulness.

[*Moves left again.*]

WU HOO GIT. What! I would repent my graciousness.

GIT HOK GAR. You cannot; you must be noble now. The lantern of his life is flickering.

TAI FAH MIN. [*Comes out of head and dress.*] I humbly repent everything for a sight of Heaven. I prayerfully and peacefully die.

[*Property man places pillow under his head.*]

WU HOO GIT. Be augustly leisurely about it then. I do not wish to be impatient.

WU FAH DIN. He trades me and my important office for Heaven.

[TAI FAH MIN *dies, crawls out of tiger skin, and afterward he gets up and walks to ladder center. Property man stops him and looks at* WU HOO GIT.]

WU HOO GIT [*going up to ladder*]. Stay! You cannot yet aspire to the celestial bliss where dwells my mother whose blood is on your hands. Depart below.

TAI FAH MIN. [*Crosses to door right. Snarls.*] May Plum Blossom never sweeten your presence again. [*Exits door right.*]

WU HOO GIT. [*Moves to door with sword, then turns front.*] Like all dying men he would trade with Heaven.

GIT HOK GAR. Philosophy is ever victorious in warfare.

WU HOO GIT. Not philosophy, love. The body of the tiger which I severed now bars my august path.

GIT HOK GAR. I would triumphantly mount over it.

[*Property man removes tiger and pillow, folding up pillow.*]

WU HOO GIT [*observing*]. It mounts for itself. It departs before me. [*Grandly.*] I notice such things not. [*Exeunt right.*]

WU FAH DIN. If I triumph I will come out and view him. If I fail I wish not to view my failure. I will part him from his friend. I will freeze him into nothingness.

[*Disappears.*]

CHORUS. [*Rises.*] 'T is a snow-storm.

[*Music. Property man's assistants enter doors right and left with white flags rolled with cut paper, which they shake out. They come down stage, cross and exeunt opposite doors from which they enter. Property man walks to center with tray of cut paper which he throws into the air, over his shoulders, then crosses to left again.*]

WU HOO GIT. [*Entering left with* GIT HOK GAR, *crosses to right center.*] What is this blast which confronts us? What is this that freezes up the warmth of your kindness?

GIT HOK GAR. It is my welcome shroud for which I long have waited. You have grown so fat in wisdom you need me not. Bow me a farewell. I am approaching my robe of wood. Take my august covering to warm your worth. I need it not on my journey.

[*Having taken off coat offers it to* WU HOO GIT.]

WU HOO GIT. Nay, you must.

[*Pushing away coat.*]

GIT HOK GAR. I need it not. Put goodness in yourself, to shut out cold. The mountain's peak of life is now in view for you. From its bleak nose you can see the riches of the world and your path beyond. If the wisdom you have purchased on your journey abides with you, it will be as gloriously fanciful as a summer's sea.

WU HOO GIT [*putting coat around shoulders of* GIT HOK GAR.] Is it decreed that I must mount alone?

GIT HOK GAR. Every man must look into the Garden of his soul alone. My journey is done. My life is spent. Yours is only begun. I die.

[*Falls to stage. Property man puts pillow under his head, kneeling above him, spreads white cloth over him, then pulls out his beard, spreading it on white sheet. Music.*]

WU HOO GIT. Die not so easily. Snow crowns your gray hair with the peace of death. I am blinded, too, in white crystals that sparkle upon me.

[*Covers his face with his hands.* GIT HOK GAR *throws off white sheet. Rises, goes up center, turns — looks at* WU HOO GIT, *smiling and with gesture of blessing. Climbs ladder to Heaven. Center opening above. Leaves his coat in snow where he died.*]

CHORUS. He ascends to Heaven!

WU HOO GIT. [*Places hands over coat of* GIT HOK GAR.] I put the warmth of my youthful hands upon you to give you life. You are dead and gone from me.

GIT HOK GAR [*above*]. I live above the coldness of the world.

[*Exits off right. Music stops.*]

WU HOO GIT [*holding white sheet over* GIT HOK GAR'S *cloak on floor*]. I build an icy tablet to his memory. I sink, I freeze. [*Falls to stage.*] I would shake the slipper, but it is a block of august ice. Moy Fah Loy! Plum Blossom! You, too, desert me in my hour of death. [*Property man crosses with tray of snow in one hand. Places pillow under his head. Puts tray of snow on ladder center.*] I augustly pronounce myself passed to my ancestors.

[*Property man covers him with white sheet. Dumps tray of cut paper on sheet and crosses to left and sits.*]

CHEE MOO. [*Enters above as spirit from right.*] I am Chee Moo, your honorable mother, who wrote your story in my blood. May the sweetness of my Heaven-prayer bring warmth into your world-body.

NUNG FU. [*Enters door left with hoe.*] Here is a man snow-bound and chill. I dig him out with my farm hoe.

WU HOO GIT. Moy Fah Loy? My words are frozen. She hears me not.

NUNG FU. He must be august to have climbed so high. An icicle kiss melts upon his lips. He is thinking of some one. Then there still is life.

WU HOO GIT. Lead me to the mountain top one august step above that I may see the world of love and my inner self.

CHEE MOO [*above, not seen*]. It is yours, my child, my Wu Hoo Git!

WU HOO GIT. What voice was that?

NUNG FU. I heard naught.

WU HOO GIT. I dream in iciness. Lead

on, for it is not in grandeur that we learn to know, but guided by the simplicity of nature's guardian of the soil we see with child eyes again all the loveliness of the world from the mountain peak of progress. How bright and glorious the sun shines! Its imperial golden liquid light dazzles my eyes. The sky becomes one huge brass bowl save for that one little gray cloud out yonder. [*Pointing above audience front.*]

Nung Fu [*screening eyes with hands*]. I see no cloud there, but here the sky has a gray cloud — my mother's soul cloud.

Wu Hoo Git. Then the one I see is my mother soul cloud. So with every golden shower of happiness there is a touch of gray — for one must pause in happiness to shed a tear for a mother heavenward passed. [*Sitting up.*] The jacket burns into my soul and conquers the freezing chill. Courage enwraps me. I shake off the numbing iciness that congealed my veins. Am I deceived again or are my eyes at last open to the circling vision of realities which were only dreams? [*Rises. Goes to door right.*] I'll toss my naked self against the palace gates.

[*Exeunt.* Chee Moo *exits above. Music.*]

Wu Fah Din. [*Rises behind drapery.*] You have heard his almost indelicate threat. I'll retire to the inner chamber of my palace and gracefully lock myself in. I will swing tighter the gate bars, wall myself about and send a crippling force against him. [*Descends from throne. Comes from behind drapery. Stands in doorway right.*] I will await him where my walls are strongest and from their top I will pelt his ambitious head with tiles.

[*Music. Assistant property man removes ladder, placing it up left. Assistants move the drapery on standards right and place it across stage at back up center showing reverse side. An assistant then gets table and stool from left. Another gets table and chair from right. They place the tables center near drapery, one below the other with the chair on the upstage table and stool on floor below the down-stage table. Assistant exits right. Another assistant exits left. Property man brings red cushion and places it on chair on table center and also places the Yellow Jacket folded in green handkerchief on right-hand corner of lower table. He goes to right of drapery and motions for* Chorus *to come out.*]

Chorus. [*Coming out from behind drapery goes to right center. Music.*] It is the throne-room of the palace of Wu Sin Yin, the Great, from which our hero has been deprived so long.

[*Retires behind drapery center. Music forte.*]

Wu Fah Din. [*Enters left. Comes down center. Ascends throne. Property man assists him. Cymbals. Property man crosses to left, then places stool up left center and sits on it, back to audience. Music stops.*] I am deserted by all, but my self-importance still remains. I feel an august valor born of my inability to get away, for I am not yet undone. Deserted as I am, I cannot be vanquished. He may break down my door bolts. He may trample my flower-beds, but when he meets me face to face upon my throne, he will tremble before the encircling power that crowns me with the wealth of ages and my family's vanquishment.

[*Music for* Wu Hoo Git's *entrance. As* Wu Hoo Git *enters, property man rises facing left and holds stool in his hands.*]

Wu Hoo Git. [*Enters door left with sword. Beats upon the stool held by property man four times with his sword. Cymbal crash for each stroke. Property man drops stool, then* Wu Hoo Git *enters imaginary gate.*] Where is the throne I seek by right? Who sits upon it?

Wu Fah Din [*looking down at him contemptuously*]. If courage stands high in you, I, too, have some in my veins, for the blood of the same father enriches us both.

Wu Hoo Git [*brandishing sword*]. Usurper! Think you to stop my way, when I have met the battling heavens? When I have conquered the peaks and held their

snow-crowns until they melted before the warmth of my hand? [*Places one foot on stool center.*] Descend before I cut you to earth, and toss your carcass from the beetling battlements. [*Steps back from throne.*] Descend, bow deeply and trade your place for mine.

WU FAH DIN. [*Seated on throne chair.*] If you will trade in gentleness, I will surrender gently. A throne is most uncomfortable. [*Rises. Descends throne to center.*]

WU HOO GIT. The sun-hued garment! I demand it!

WU FAH DIN. [*Goes to right of table. Pushes Yellow Jacket in handkerchief across table toward* WU HOO GIT.] I extend to you the badge of office. I have always disliked the color, it is so cold.

[WU FAH DIN *crosses to right center.* WU HOO GIT *takes off his own jacket and hands it to property man, who puts it in box left.* WU HOO GIT *then takes Yellow Jacket out of handkerchief. Property man assists him to put it on.*]

WU HOO GIT. Bump your head to me.

[DAFFODIL *kneels right center.*]

WU FAH DIN. My head! I am glad I have a head to bump. [*Bumps head twice. Wood block.*] May I still retain it?

WU HOO GIT. My first act in assuming my power shall be one of mercy. Choose your prison.

WU FAH DIN [*looking up*]. A garden! A garden filled with smiling flowers. [WU HOO GIT *makes a gesture of assent.* DAFFODIL *rises.*] Then I retire to its fragrance.

[*Backs up stage. Exits right.*]

WU HOO GIT. [*Crosses to center, back to audience.*] Victorious at last! I ascend the throne of my ancestors. [*Music. He mounts throne. Turns front standing.*] I shake the slipper for my Plum Blossom. [*Shakes slipper. Cymbals crash. General entrance.*] My Plum Blossom!

[*Music changes. Play piano.*]

MOY FAH LOY [*crossing to him center on one foot*]. I guided them to you.

WU HOO GIT. Have you brought your impressive body with you?

MOY FAH LOY. Yes.

WU HOO GIT. Ascend my throne. [*She ascends. Sits on chair.*] Your slipper shall be my scepter.

[*Puts it on her foot, standing right of table center.*]

MOY FAH LOY. My love!

WU HOO GIT. My Plum Blossom!

[*All kneel and bow low.*]

CHEE MOO. [*In upper opening center.*] The world and wisdom are his. [*Music.*]

TABLEAU CURTAIN

[CHORUS *comes out before tableau curtain.*]

CHORUS. And now, most august and honorable neighbors, you may bestow your kindly recognition upon my brothers as I nominate them each in turn and they will personally augustly thank you.

[*Tableau curtains are drawn. Company lined up across stage.* CHORUS *now points out each member of the company in turn, beginning with* CHEE MOO, *then* WU HOO GIT, PLUM BLOSSOM, *etc., indicating character first one side of the stage then the other, property man last.*]

CHORUS. Chee Moo, the mother! My hero! [*Indicating* WU HOO GIT.] My little heroine! [*Indicating* PLUM BLOSSOM.] The philosopher! [*Indicating* GIT HOK GAR.] The nurse! [*Indicating* SEE NOI.] The temptress of the flower boat! [*Indicating* CHOW WAN.] The purveyor of hearts! [*Indicating* YIN SUEY GONG.] The daffodil! [*Indicating* WU FAH DIN.] The farmer and his wife! [*Indicating* LEE SIN *and* SUEY SIN FAH.] The widow! [*Indicating her.*] Tai Char Shoong! [*Indicating him.*] The second wife! [*Indicating* DUE JUNG FAH.] A siren! [*Indicating* SEE QUOE FAH.] And yet another siren! [*Indicating* YONG SOO KOW.] And now quite visible to your eyes, our property man.

[*Property man who has been seated on box left, smoking, rises, crosses to* CHORUS *center, shakes hands in the Chinese manner, bows to audience, crosses to right.*]

CURTAIN

A LOVING WIFE

(*AMOUREUSE*)

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

By GEORGES DE PORTO-RICHE

Translated by J. P. W. CRAWFORD

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TO
PAREL AND TO RÉJANE

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

Étienne Fériaud
Pascal Delannoy
Germaine Fériaud
Catherine Villiers
Madame de Chazal
Madame Henriet
Madeleine

A LOVING WIFE

ACT I

The home of ÉTIENNE FÉRIAUD. *A study in disorder. Books and papers scattered about, etc. A lighted lamp on a desk.*

[*Enter* PASCAL, *wearing his hat.*]

PASCAL. Has Monsieur returned home?

MADELEINE [*arranging on a small table a tray with a bottle and several glasses*]. Not yet.

PASCAL. And Madame?

MADELEINE. Madame is over there.

PASCAL. Alone?

MADELEINE. With Madame de Vitry.

PASCAL [*in a vexed tone*]. Always callers.

MADELEINE. But, sir, this is Thursday. Madame receives to-day.

PASCAL [*taking off his hat*]. I shall not go in. Fix the fire for me, Madeleine.

MADELEINE. I have just put on a log.

PASCAL. Put on another.

MADELEINE [*poking the fire*]. Monsieur is hard to please, for an artist.

PASCAL. The poor have more need of comfort than others, my child. And now, open that window. The room smells of tobacco.

MADELEINE. Yes, sir.

[PASCAL *picks up a newspaper and installs himself in an arm-chair by the fireside.*]

PASCAL [*reading*]. "Madame C . . ." [*Interrupting his reading.*] Another husband who has just found his wife untrue . . . Madame C . . . I'll wager it is Madame Crozat . . . Poor little woman!

MADELEINE. Do you wish anything else, sir?

PASCAL. Yes. What is in that bottle?

MADELEINE. Malaga wine.

PASCAL. My Malaga?

MADELEINE. Yes, sir.

PASCAL. That's what I need. [*Pouring out a drink.*] The only wine that one can drink here.

MADELEINE. Oh! sir.

PASCAL [*point-blank*]. How is your lover Madeleine?

MADELEINE. But I have no lover!

PASCAL. A pretty girl like you?

MADELEINE. No, sir.

PASCAL. How old are you?

MADELEINE. I am twenty-two.

PASCAL. Six years wasted!

MADELEINE. If I had a lover, I should be less cheerful.

PASCAL. But all the same you would be happier.

MADELEINE. I know a painter who often tells me nonsense like that.

PASCAL [*quickly*]. A painter?

MADELEINE. A painter who works at the glazier's, across the street.

PASCAL. You flatter me. [*Pause.*] Is M. Fériaud leaving this evening?

MADELEINE. The doctor will leave very soon.

PASCAL. The house will not be very amusing. I shall have a stupid time of it.

[*Enter* GERMAINE.]

GERMAINE [*at the door, affectionately*]. Are you there, dear?

PASCAL [*without moving from his arm-chair*]. No, Madame, he is not here.

GERMAINE. Oh! It's you, Pascal!

PASCAL. I am waiting for Étienne.

GERMAINE. Why did you not come into the drawing-room?

PASCAL. You had tiresome guests.

GERMAINE. You would have helped me to receive them.

PASCAL. Disturb myself? Not much!

GERMAINE. I must go. Come along, selfish fellow, come with me.

PASCAL. That is not to be dreamed of, my little Germaine. Just see how well fixed I am here.

GERMAINE [*about to leave*]. Spoiled kitten!

PASCAL. Ah! Do not leave me. Now I shall be all alone.

GERMAINE. I am afraid callers will come.

PASCAL. Stay.

GERMAINE. No.

PASCAL. I shall not allow you to be told when your husband returns.

GERMAINE. That makes no difference to me. I am watching for him.

PASCAL. At what time does he leave?

GERMAINE [*taking a chair and sitting down beside him*]. At eight o'clock, my good Pascal.

PASCAL. So you sit down after all.

GERMAINE. You think that I am going to stay, do you? He leaves this evening for Italy. He is going to preside over the French delegation to the Medical Congress.

PASCAL. A queer idea, for him to leave us in this fashion!

GERMAINE. This is the first time we shall have been separated in our eight years of married life.

PASCAL. I have not missed seeing him a single day in the last fifteen years.

GERMAINE. It appears that this trip is necessary for his work.

PASCAL. What difference does his work make to us?

GERMAINE. Poor fellow, I persecute him and torment him. He will not be sorry to have a little freedom.

PASCAL. Between ourselves, my dear, you are becoming unbearable.

GERMAINE. I realize that, but what can you expect? The clocks of a house never keep the same time; when one is fast, the other is slow.

PASCAL. And they never strike together.

GERMAINE. What self-restraint one needs not to love one's husband! If I did not adore mine, things would be better.

PASCAL. The fact is that everything is topsy turvy in your house. You quarrel, the meals are bad . . . If it continues, I shall stay away.

GERMAINE. You will look for a quieter house.

PASCAL. I am joking. I am too old to change my habits.

GERMAINE. Follow your friend's example, and travel.

PASCAL. Worries keep me at Paris.

GERMAINE. Is your lady-in-waiting still the cause of them?

PASCAL. Yes.

GERMAINE. And you do not work?

PASCAL. No indeed.

GERMAINE. What a pity! Yesterday I saw the director of the *Illustrated Review*. Do you know that he is dissatisfied?

PASCAL. A furious director is always diverting.

GERMAINE. He has been waiting for your drawings for a month.

PASCAL. He made a mistake in paying me for them in advance.

GERMAINE. Is Mauricette an expensive mistress?

PASCAL. Not yet. She is so young.

GERMAINE. Seriously, Pascal. For the sake of your dignity, you should break off relations with that woman.

PASCAL. I do nothing else.

GERMAINE. You do not love her, she deceives you, and you suffer as if you did love her.

PASCAL. She tortures me. She does not deceive me.

GERMAINE. Dupe!

PASCAL. Love is blind.

GERMAINE. Yet it is making you see things!

PASCAL. I confess it.

GERMAINE. If you were reasonable, you would listen to me . . .

PASCAL. And I would marry Madame Brissot.

GERMAINE. Why not?

PASCAL. A divorcée? A book already read!

GERMAINE. But not on the shelf.

PASCAL. Have you set your heart on that?

GERMAINE. Just think, my friend, an income of fifty thousand francs!

PASCAL. Are you not ashamed to talk like that, you who have made a love marriage.

GERMAINE. One might love Madame Brissot.

PASCAL. Too thin.

GERMAINE. But thin women are sometimes dangerous.

PASCAL. Like fish-bones! I refuse. In the first place, she disgusts me with her piety, your Madame Brissot. Oh! These pious women, I . . .

GERMAINE. You send them to the devil.

PASCAL. If God paid any attention to them, well and good, I would understand, but . . .

GERMAINE. Come now, don't begin to speak ill of God. That's out of date.

PASCAL. Agreed. Let us speak well of him. It is more charitable, since he is not here.

GERMAINE. He is the only one who is not gossiped about behind his back.

PASCAL. Because he has never been seen.

GERMAINE. Be quiet. You talk like an alderman.

[*Enter* ÉTIENNE.]

PASCAL. At last!

GERMAINE. There he is!

ÉTIENNE. Ah! How tired I am!

PASCAL. Of course. He is always tired when he comes home, and never tired when he leaves.

GERMAINE [*to* ÉTIENNE]. Now will you be good!

PASCAL. Explain yourself. Why have you been away so long?

GERMAINE. Yes, where have you been?

ÉTIENNE. I have just left the Academy.

PASCAL. That is not true.

GERMAINE. There was no session to-day.

ÉTIENNE [*pouring out a drink*]. I was presiding over a commission.

GERMAINE. I believe you, at least.

PASCAL. Ah! Don't drink my wine.

ÉTIENNE. I am late because I walked home.

GERMAINE. A lover would have taken a cab.

ÉTIENNE. I wanted to take the tram.

PASCAL. That represents a friend's eagerness.

ÉTIENNE. But I had to wait too long and I lost my patience.

PASCAL. Your health will benefit by a good walk. I forgive you.

ÉTIENNE [*taking from his pocket a tram-car ticket*]. This ticket, number 53, which I forgot to give to the conductor, is evidence of my truthfulness.

[*He puts it back in his pocket.*]

PASCAL. Is it decided, then, that you are going to represent France at a congress?

ÉTIENNE. I am leaving shortly for Florence.

PASCAL. And you dare to see Italy again without me?

ÉTIENNE. Come along. I am traveling with Marcotte and his mistress.

PASCAL. You mean little Janin?

GERMAINE [*ill-humoredly*]. The friend of Mademoiselle Villiers, a household with which you used to be intimate?

ÉTIENNE. Precisely.

PASCAL. You tempt me. I have a mind to go with you, but then, Germaine would be left entirely alone.

GERMAINE. How about taking me?

ÉTIENNE. Don't be silly.

PASCAL. We shall not be obliged to travel in the Marcottes' compartment.

ÉTIENNE [*pointing to* GERMAINE]. If I take her with me, I shall not have time to see her.

PASCAL. But I can see her.

ÉTIENNE. I am coming back in a week.

GERMAINE [*to* PASCAL]. Don't insist.

PASCAL. Then I shall stay too.

ÉTIENNE. It is not nice to abandon you both, but you will agree that I have not the right to refuse this mission . . . [*becoming animated*] a mission which will give me a chance to defend my ideas. Thanks to this Congress, the prophylaxis of contagious diseases . . .

PASCAL. You are not going to deliver us a lecture, are you?

GERMAINE. You may expound your theories to Mademoiselle Janin, en route.

ÉTIENNE. Perhaps she will be more interested in them than you.

PASCAL. Of course she will. You are not her husband.

ÉTIENNE. Very well. Let us talk no more of my affairs.

GERMAINE. Come now. Don't look so angry.

PASCAL. You know very well that we are not completely indifferent to your interests.

GERMAINE. Stop joking. His work has been useful.

ÉTIENNE. Perhaps.

PASCAL. Nonsense. Discoveries in medicine are like those in artillery. They teach how to kill men more quickly, that's all.

GERMAINE. The fewer there are . . .

PASCAL [*pointing to* ÉTIENNE]. Provided that one remain.

ÉTIENNE [*with annoyance*]. Ah! That lamp is smoking. [*He turns up the wick.*]

GERMAINE. Are you dining with us, Pascal?

PASCAL. That depends whether it is a good dinner.

ÉTIENNE. It is I who ordered it.

PASCAL. That gives me hope.

ÉTIENNE. I plan the meals now. You will have duckling and Russian salad.

PASCAL. Is that all?

ÉTIENNE. Yes.

PASCAL. Add some crawfishes for your wife.

ÉTIENNE. She does n't need a stimulant.

GERMAINE [*to* PASCAL]. You are insulting! [*To* ÉTIENNE.] Did you stop at Doucet's?

ÉTIENNE. Your dress will be ready tomorrow.

GERMAINE. Thank you for not forgetting.

ÉTIENNE. Oh! By the way . . .

GERMAINE. What are you looking for in your pocket? A present?

ÉTIENNE. You have guessed right.

[*He hands a small jewel-box to* GERMAINE.]

GERMAINE. A ring!

PASCAL. Let us see!

GERMAINE. Oh! What a beauty!

PASCAL [*grumbling*]. I can't agree with you. The diamond is too small.

ÉTIENNE [*to* GERMAINE]. Do you like it?

PASCAL. No one ever brings me anything.

GERMAINE. I must give you a kiss.

ÉTIENNE. All right. Be quick about it.

GERMAINE [*tenderly*]. Can one kiss quickly?

PASCAL. I shall turn my back.

GERMAINE. That makes no difference.

PASCAL [*to* ÉTIENNE]. You will lose nothing by waiting.

GERMAINE. So then, you love me a little bit?

ÉTIENNE. You know very well that I do.

PASCAL. Ah, my children! Have mercy on me. I am all alone.

ÉTIENNE. How décolletée you are!

GERMAINE. Is that a criticism?

ÉTIENNE [*fascinated*]. Yes and no. In spite of myself, I am captivated, and unexpectedly disconcerted. I have such weighty problems on my mind just now that I should have preferred . . . to think of nothing else.

[MADELEINE *enters with letters on a tray.*]

GERMAINE. Letters?

ÉTIENNE [*to* MADELEINE]. Give them to me.

GERMAINE [*handing to* ÉTIENNE *a letter which she has just picked up*]. Oh! I was not going to open it.

ÉTIENNE. You were smelling it.

GERMAINE. That's different.

PASCAL. It's exactly the same. Scented letter-paper means a pet name.

[MADELEINE *goes out.*]

ÉTIENNE [*seated at his desk, looking over his mail*]. Requests for consultations, but I do not receive patients . . . the *Edinburgh Review* . . . an article by Mackensie on diphtheria and Gaucher's method . . . Ha! My name occurs several times . . . You don't know English, do you, Pascal?

PASCAL. I don't even know Russian.

ÉTIENNE. Next, a bill from Reboux for two hundred and ten francs.

GERMAINE. My black hat.

ÉTIENNE [*handing the bill to* GERMAINE]. Here you are.

GERMAINE [*refusing it*]. You may pay it yourself.

ÉTIENNE. Very well. I shall attend to it.

PASCAL. Really, my little Germaine, he is too good-natured. Things of that kind fall within your province. How do you spend your time all day?

ÉTIENNE. My wife looks after her husband, and I look after the rest.

GERMAINE. Oh! How nice you are! I adore you when you are angry.

ÉTIENNE. I am growing tired of the job.

PASCAL. Come now. Don't go on grumbling.

GERMAINE. You have a better disposition than you think, you know.

PASCAL. We saw you at work when she had typhoid fever.

GERMAINE. My poor friend, do you remember? He spent twenty nights at my bedside.

ÉTIENNE. Be quiet. I can't read while you are talking.

GERMAINE. But I want to talk.

ÉTIENNE. Where does Parigot live?

PASCAL. Rue de la Sorbonne.

GERMAINE. No, he has moved.

ÉTIENNE. Confound it! I must answer at once.

PASCAL. Look up his address in the directory.

ÉTIENNE [*annoyed*]. Where is it?

GERMAINE. Over there.

PASCAL. No, it is not.

ÉTIENNE. There is your veil. Pins on my desk as usual.

GERMAINE. If you were a bachelor, you would not complain.

ÉTIENNE. I can't find it. One can find nothing in this house.

PASCAL. Except dust.

ÉTIENNE. I shall write to him later. What a chaos! I should have a secretary to put this house in order. I should have had a sister or an aunt from the country, irritating perhaps, to go about the apartment and keep my things in place. I have n't even a mother-in-law!

[MADELEINE *comes in with a package.*]

PASCAL [*to* MADELEINE]. What now?

MADELEINE. Books for Madame.

GERMAINE [*opening the bundle*]. *A Woman's Heart.*

ÉTIENNE. *Our Heart.*

PASCAL. *Their Heart.*

GERMAINE. *Three Hearts.*

[MADELEINE *goes out.*]

ÉTIENNE. Bourget, Maupassant . . .

GERMAINE. Lavedan, Rod.

PASCAL. Love stories.

ÉTIENNE. With adultery as chief topic.

GERMAINE. Women's sorrows.

ÉTIENNE. That's what she reads.

GERMAINE. I read what I understand best.

ÉTIENNE. Why don't you find a lover some day, since you are so inquisitive?

PASCAL. Be patient.

GERMAINE. One can never tell. Your bachelor days are over, mine are beginning.

ÉTIENNE. Your bachelor days?

PASCAL. Of course. You are her first lover.

ÉTIENNE. And the last.

GERMAINE. I hope so with all my heart.

ÉTIENNE. Are you not certain of it?

PASCAL. Be careful, my dear fellow. You are actually savage at times. An indiscretion is the affair of a moment.

ÉTIENNE. A virtuous woman never loses her head.

GERMAINE. Let us hope that is true.

PASCAL. Bah! Dishonor is like black clothes for a funeral. They can make it up for you in a day.

ÉTIENNE. My love, if you ever deceive me, be careful of your choice, for all men are scoundrels.

PASCAL. With the exception of myself.

ÉTIENNE. Yes, you are a good fellow.

GERMAINE. There is no hope for you, then.

PASCAL. Why is there no hope for me? I protest. Perhaps you were foolish in refusing to marry me, nine years ago.

GERMAINE. You should not have sent Étienne to propose for you.

ÉTIENNE [*to* PASCAL]. I was loyal to you in presenting your case.

GERMAINE. He was very insistent.

PASCAL. A little more and my happiness would have been assured.

GERMAINE. A little more, I should have been your wife and [*turning to* ÉTIENNE] your mistress.

PASCAL. Perhaps things will be reversed.

GERMAINE. Never, my good Pascal.

ÉTIENNE [*jokingly, to* PASCAL]. Who can tell? In spite of your stories, at heart you only love my wife.

PASCAL. Worse luck!

ÉTIENNE. And if I make her too unhappy, you will console her.

PASCAL. Do you think so? That's fine!

ÉTIENNE. We shall separate some day,

my darling. I have a presentiment that you will leave me.

GERMAINE. Leave you? Never! Don't count on that, my dear. Don't cherish that absurd hope, it is not worth while. Whatever I may do, whatever you do, I shall stay here, in your house, beside you, always, whatever happens, clinging to you like . . .

PASCAL. Like a leech.

ÉTIENNE. What a sharp tongue you have!

GERMAINE. We shall live together forever.

PASCAL. And we shall bury you with her.

ÉTIENNE. I draw the line on that! I want to be alone in my grave.

GERMAINE. But I would not annoy you very much.

ÉTIENNE. I won't hear of it.

PASCAL. Well then, you go first. She will join you later.

ÉTIENNE. It will not be long, my dear friends. I am growing old . . . fortunately.

PASCAL. Fortunately?

ÉTIENNE [*bitterly*]. Yes, I await old age with impatience, when my heart will be insensible. How eager I am to grow old!

GERMAINE. What a joy it will be to have white hair!

PASCAL. Or to have none at all!

ÉTIENNE. I can imagine myself beside the fire-place, sensible, rational, disregarded, with my books, my wife and my son, for it must be expected that some day or other . . .

PASCAL. A child? You can ask a friend for that.

ÉTIENNE. Ah! How happy I should be to feel my brain clear! What freedom from worry! Loving couples may pass before my windows, but I shall not look after them enviously. No, I shall rub my hands with delight when I think of their torments, their heart burnings, their wasted time and all those hours stolen from duty, work and thinking. That will be real happiness. I shall be sixty years old then.

GERMAINE. Yes, but now you are only forty-three.

PASCAL. And your health is excellent.

GERMAINE. Twenty years more for love, my poor dear. Be brave.

ÉTIENNE. Forgive me. I am saying things that I do not mean.

PASCAL [*aside, to* ÉTIENNE]. You are hurting her feelings, my dear fellow.

ÉTIENNE. If only she would remain angry a week!

PASCAL. You would not like that.

[*Enter* MADELEINE.]

MADELEINE. Madame de Chazal and Madame Henriet are in the drawing-room.

GERMAINE. Very well.

[MADELEINE *leaves.*]

PASCAL. Two society women.

GERMAINE. Two geese, who do not come to see me, but my husband.

PASCAL. That is the practice here.

GERMAINE [*to* ÉTIENNE]. Your hair is not yet white.

PASCAL. Would they like to steal him from you?

GERMAINE. Perhaps they have done so already.

ÉTIENNE. Come now, Germaine.

GERMAINE. Ah! I have no illusions regarding my friends. I know what they want.

PASCAL. And he reproaches you for not receiving women.

GERMAINE [*about to leave*]. Oh! I deprive him of opportunities.

ÉTIENNE [*annoyed*]. You are unjust.

GERMAINE. I robbed him of one opportunity a little while ago. On a pretext of asking him some important advice, a woman insisted on entering his office. I opened the door for her, but, behold, Adonis had gone out.

ÉTIENNE. Who was it?

GERMAINE. That little Chailly woman.

PASCAL. The widow, whose husband died the evening of their marriage?

GERMAINE. Lucky husband!

ÉTIENNE. By the way, I forgot to tell you. Don't expect your hairdresser tomorrow morning.

GERMAINE. Why not?

ÉTIENNE. He will not be here. He hanged himself.

GERMAINE. Hanged himself!

PASCAL. In his shop-window?

ÉTIENNE. His wife was unfaithful to him.

GERMAINE. Poor devil! . . . You would not hang yourself, would you?

ÉTIENNE. Who knows?

GERMAINE [*reproachfully*]. Oh! The rope would break.

ÉTIENNE. Good Lord! What a woman!

GERMAINE. I shall send them off and come back to you.

PASCAL. We are not uneasy.

[GERMAINE *goes out.*]

ÉTIENNE. Will you allow me to write for a moment?

PASCAL. You are mighty crabbed this evening.

ÉTIENNE [*writing*]. I am out of sorts.

PASCAL. That is evident. What is wrong?

ÉTIENNE. Nothing new.

PASCAL [*sketching*]. See, your nose is longer than usual. You are like a child. When you are naughty, you are homely.

ÉTIENNE. Are you drawing a caricature of me?

PASCAL. It will not cost you a cent, and yet my rent is due to-morrow.

ÉTIENNE. If you need any money . . .

PASCAL. I never borrow, I am too ungrateful. I could never forgive a friend who had done me a favor.

ÉTIENNE. Then apply to an enemy.

PASCAL. It is less expensive.

ÉTIENNE. Come now, we are alone. Don't play the cynic. [*A pause.*] By the way, have you seen that one of your water-color drawings was sold for two thousand francs?

PASCAL. Really?

ÉTIENNE. Yesterday, at the Montigny sale. I read about it in this morning's paper.

PASCAL. A water-color of mine for two thousand francs? My Lord! How stupid people are!

ÉTIENNE. Not so stupid as you think.

PASCAL. The dealers have never offered me such a price as that.

ÉTIENNE. Work, and that day will soon come.

PASCAL. When it comes, I shall have at least a right to be lazy.

ÉTIENNE. You will lead the gay life.

PASCAL. I shall make about thirty drawings a year, no more.

ÉTIENNE. And then?

PASCAL. When my living expenses are once assured, I shall look after my diversions.

ÉTIENNE. To think that if you had no talent, you would probably be a hard worker!

PASCAL. Then, I congratulate myself on possessing a little.

ÉTIENNE. You have a great deal, my dear fellow.

PASCAL. You are mistaken, I know myself. Do you know what my artist's conscience suggests to me? To fold my arms, nothing more. That is the real way to avoid painting bad pictures, for I am as second-rate as the next man, as a lot of people, second-rate like yourself.

ÉTIENNE. Thanks.

PASCAL. In these days, everybody has talent. It is becoming unbearable.

ÉTIENNE. So then, you have no ambition?

PASCAL. Not the slightest, and I think with terror of the provincial art gallery where I shall probably be buried some day or other, for that is the glory that awaits me.

ÉTIENNE. Then it is clear that you do not love your art.

PASCAL. I value love and friendship more highly.

ÉTIENNE. Friends abandon us and women deceive us.

PASCAL. Just wait a while.

ÉTIENNE. For my part, I am only completely happy at this desk.

PASCAL. You say so to-day because you are surfeited.

ÉTIENNE. Rather because I have taken a few steps forward.

PASCAL. Do you think that you are gaining ground?

ÉTIENNE. I began with love, I am ending by devoting myself to science.

PASCAL. That is disagreeable for your wife.

ÉTIENNE. Perhaps we met one another too late.

PASCAL. You believe that the happiness of humanity comes first, and your wife's happiness second, do you not?

ÉTIENNE. If I am of any use in the world, it is her duty to yield.

PASCAL. Selfish fellow!

ÉTIENNE. Do you realize that my researches on diphtheria might save thousands of lives?

PASCAL. Don't lose your head. Their value is yet to be proved.

ÉTIENNE. It will be proved.

PASCAL. And what if it is? A lot of good it will do! When you cure one disease, God sends us another. It seems that we must always have in this world the same number of plagues. We might as well keep those that we know about. And after all, what is the use? Until the end of time there will be poor and rich, rascals with luck and honest people without luck. You can shut yourself in your house and work, you may have genius, but you will never change the order of things. Nothing is worth while.

ÉTIENNE. You are preaching the doctrine of cowardice, the uselessness of effort. If our fathers had reasoned like you, the earth would still be uninhabitable and men would go about naked.

PASCAL. Women too.

ÉTIENNE. We should be walking on all fours, my good friend.

PASCAL. I might find that very amusing.

ÉTIENNE. You paint trees, but your forefathers climbed them.

PASCAL. I should be very much embarrassed to follow their example.

ÉTIENNE. You make fun of savants, artists and poets, but they are the ones who have improved this imperfect world. It is they who have made it more bearable, less disagreeable to those who are pleasure-mad and to the destitute. I grant that they have been bad husbands, lukewarm friends and disobedient sons. What difference does that make? Their labors and their dreams have sown the seed of happiness, of justice and of beauty in the world. These egoists did not love, but they created love for succeeding ages.

PASCAL. Well, let the good work go on, my friends. Suppress suffering and hatred. After all, I ask nothing better.

ÉTIENNE. We shall succeed in that.

PASCAL. In six weeks?

ÉTIENNE. In a few centuries. We have already extended the limits of life.

PASCAL. How cruel! Who can tell? With a little luck, you may finally suppress death itself.

ÉTIENNE. Conquer death? Oh! my dear fellow, we have already made such progress.

PASCAL. I should like to live in those days.

ÉTIENNE. Because you are not married.

PASCAL. After all, what would be the use? You could not prolong youth.

ÉTIENNE. Bah! You can think of nothing but love.

[*Enter* GERMAINE, MADAME DE CHAZAL, MADAME HENRIET.]

MADAME HENRIET [*to* ÉTIENNE]. May I shake hands with you?

MADAME DE CHAZAL [*to* ÉTIENNE]. May I wish you a pleasant journey?

ÉTIENNE. Of course.

MADAME DE CHAZAL [*to* PASCAL]. Oh! Monsieur Delannoy?

PASCAL [*bowing*]. In person.

GERMAINE [*to* ÉTIENNE, *drawing near to his desk*]. Were you writing?

ÉTIENNE. You may see for yourself.

GERMAINE. I annoy you.

ÉTIENNE. No.

MADAME DE CHAZAL [*to* PASCAL]. They say that you are going to marry Madame Brissot. Is it true?

PASCAL. That would surprise me. In the first place, I am a personal enemy of marriage.

GERMAINE. Please don't talk like that!

PASCAL. Marriage is an antiquated institution which had a beginning and will have an end.

ÉTIENNE [*gaily*]. Never make such a contract . . .

PASCAL. So immoral a contract, for one should only assume those that one can fulfil, and no one is ever sure of keeping the marriage contract.

MADAME HENRIET [*to* PASCAL]. In the meanwhile, your engagement was announced this evening at the Févriers.

GERMAINE [*sentimentally*]. Ah! The betrothal . . .

ÉTIENNE. The happiest thing about marriage.

GERMAINE. I believe the happiest time . . .

PASCAL. Comes afterwards.

GERMAINE. I had not the courage to say so.

MADAME HENRIET [*to* ÉTIENNE]. That is greatly to your credit.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. And you are past forty.

PASCAL. He belongs to the reserve, but he is kept under the colors.

ÉTIENNE [*dismayed*]. I have no luck at all. All women love me.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. When one is liked by everybody, one runs the risk of making no one happy.

PASCAL [*jokingly*]. And yet, just look at this man. He is not handsome.

MADAME HENRIET. He is faded.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. He dresses carelessly.

ÉTIENNE. I do that purposely.

GERMAINE. It makes no difference. Nothing discourages us.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. Your men friends must hate you, don't they?

ÉTIENNE. Heartily.

PASCAL. He still has plenty of hair, the rascal!

ÉTIENNE. How many enemies it has made for me!

PASCAL. I know a bald fellow who criticises you everywhere.

ÉTIENNE. An old chum of mine? That ne'er-do-well of a . . . ? His soul is as bare as his skull.

GERMAINE [*to* PASCAL]. All the same, my Étienne is nice, is n't he?

PASCAL [*furious*]. When we go out together, I always wink at the women, but they look at him.

MADAME HENRIET. Poor Pascal!

GERMAINE [*to* ÉTIENNE]. Do they stop you in the street?

PASCAL. No, but they follow him.

ÉTIENNE. Clown!

PASCAL. You have been followed twice this winter, I have proof of it.

MADAME HENRIET. That's beyond belief.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. He is followed on the street.

PASCAL. Like a woman.

GERMAINE. Like a grisette.

ÉTIENNE. Alas! Sometimes I think that I must be one.

GERMAINE. Fortunately you are not mercenary.

ÉTIENNE [*gaily*]. Ah, my friends! I might have earned millions.

GERMAINE [*to* MADAME HENRIET, *offering her candy*]. Will you have some candy?

[GERMAINE, MADAME HENRIET *and* PASCAL *go up stage.*]

MADAME DE CHAZAL [*to* ÉTIENNE]. You seem to be sorry that women like you.

ÉTIENNE. You are quite right.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. Too much success?

ÉTIENNE [*roguishly*]. Too many orders.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. So much the worse.

ÉTIENNE [*drawing away*]. Yes, I have a great deal to do just now. I am very busy.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. Do you remember the little first floor apartment where we used to meet one whole winter . . . before your marriage?

ÉTIENNE. Fifteen years ago?

MADAME DE CHAZAL. Not so long ago as that.

ÉTIENNE. Let me see. You came between . . .

MADAME DE CHAZAL. What a cynic you are!

ÉTIENNE. A lady from Hâvre was your successor.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. In the same apartment?

ÉTIENNE. Ugh!

MADAME DE CHAZAL. I passed the house yesterday. The apartment is vacant.

ÉTIENNE. It is lucky.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. Shall we take it again?

ÉTIENNE. I am going away.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. When you return?

ÉTIENNE. Ah! my dear. I tell you I am very busy.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. Do you mean worn out?

ÉTIENNE. And really, I know what your demands are. You would not be satisfied.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. Worn out! May I say so?

ÉTIENNE. Yes! Say so, I beg of you, so that I shall be left in peace.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. If Germaine knew how bored you are by all that, she would be less jealous.

ÉTIENNE. I make sport of you and all the rest. That is mere bravado. As a matter of fact, I work hard and am faithful to my wife.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. You are faithful to her, but you are not sorry to allow her to believe that you are not.

ÉTIENNE. I am so conceited.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. Do you love no one but her?

ÉTIENNE. That is a question which she just asked me, and which she will probably ask me again in five minutes.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. You bundle of conceit!

ÉTIENNE. I'll wager that she will.

GERMAINE [*drawing near*]. What are you two laughing about in the corner? You are speaking ill of me, I am sure.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. No.

ÉTIENNE. No, my love.

GERMAINE [*tenderly*]. Do you love me?

ÉTIENNE. I have won.

GERMAINE. What is the meaning of the joke?

ÉTIENNE. I made a wager with Madame de Chazal that you would ask me that question within five minutes.

[MADAME DE CHAZAL *draws near* MADAME HENRIET *and* PASCAL.]

GERMAINE [*to* ÉTIENNE]. You have reason to make fun of me. I am a fool.

ÉTIENNE. Nonsense, grown-up baby! I am only joking.

GERMAINE [*sadly*]. What a strange mania women have to try at all costs to wrench a pleasant reply from you, even though they know the reply will be false.

ÉTIENNE [*jokingly*]. Let us make up, old love.

GERMAINE. If I am your old love, I shall be another's new love.

ÉTIENNE. Germaine!

GERMAINE [*gaily*]. A woman is only complete when she inspires all kinds of feelings.

[GERMAINE *joins* PASCAL *and* MADAME DE CHAZAL.]

MADAME DE CHAZAL [*to* MADAME HENRIET]. Six o'clock! We must go. I have a dinner engagement. I shall hardly have time to dress.

PASCAL. Does that require much time?

MADAME DE CHAZAL. Very little.

MADAME HENRIET [*to* ÉTIENNE]. Good-by, bluffer.

ÉTIENNE. Why bluffer?

MADAME HENRIET. Because you forget your promises.

ÉTIENNE. What do you mean?

MADAME HENRIET. You promised to write to me.

ÉTIENNE. Ah yes! To fix an hour for you.

MADAME HENRIET. Pardon me. Two hours.

ÉTIENNE. Very well.

MADAME HENRIET. I shall expect your letter.

ÉTIENNE. Here is the proof that I have been thinking of you.

MADAME HENRIET. Your wife is watching us.

ÉTIENNE. Take it.

[*He slips into her hand his car ticket.*]

MADAME HENRIET [*in a choking voice*]. Number 53!

ÉTIENNE. When I return, perhaps I can give you a lower one.

MADAME HENRIET. Boor!

ÉTIENNE [*bursting into laughter*]. Forgive me. I am in love with my wife.

MADAME HENRIET. What a punishment for a roué!

PASCAL [*to* MADAME DE CHAZAL]. So then, you refuse me?

MADAME DE CHAZAL. Yes.

PASCAL. What must I do to persuade you?

MADAME DE CHAZAL. Many things.

MADAME HENRIET. You must give up all other ties.

PASCAL. And knots as well.

MADAME DE CHAZAL. Philanderer! [*To* ÉTIENNE.] Bon voyage, doctor.

ÉTIENNE. Thank you.

MADAME HENRIET. Good-by.

GERMAINE. Good-by.

PASCAL. I shall put them in their carriage.

[MADAME DE CHAZAL, MADAME HENRIET *and* PASCAL *go out.*]

GERMAINE. We are alone at last. You won't worry me any more, will you?

ÉTIENNE. Are you still annoyed with me?

GERMAINE. No.

ÉTIENNE [*closing the door*]. Good!

GERMAINE. What luck! A tête-à-tête!

ÉTIENNE. Yes.

GERMAINE. That's right. Close the door.

ÉTIENNE. I warn you. I have not shut it tight.

GERMAINE. Oh! There is little chance of your bolting it.

ÉTIENNE. You must restrain yourself.

GERMAINE [*roguishly*]. At least, let me kiss you. Oh! Don't be afraid. I shall not squeeze you too hard. I shall kiss you tenderly, chastely, as you kiss me.

ÉTIENNE. Kiss me in any way you like.

GERMAINE. In any way I like?

ÉTIENNE. Your lover allows it.

GERMAINE. Yes, but my husband forbids it. [*She kisses him.*]

ÉTIENNE. Enough.

GERMAINE. Just one more.

ÉTIENNE. I am in a hurry.

GERMAINE. It won't take long.

ÉTIENNE. All right, the last one, then.

GERMAINE. I promise.

[*She kisses him again.*]

ÉTIENNE. Oh! You're choking me. The witch! She knows all the tricks of the game.

GERMAINE. I could have invented new ones.

ÉTIENNE [*jokingly*]. Be quiet! You're immodest! If a reporter heard you . . .

GERMAINE. Perverted people are always easily shocked. Now it's your turn.

ÉTIENNE [*kissing her*]. There you are.

GERMAINE. Is that all?

ÉTIENNE. Yes.

GERMAINE. Only one?

ÉTIENNE. A second would be dangerous.

GERMAINE. Suppose it were? . . .

ÉTIENNE. Let us talk about something else.

GERMAINE. There is no danger, since you are going away.

ÉTIENNE. I'll give you another presently.

GERMAINE. Only one! That's what you always say. Talk to me now. Tell me something.

ÉTIENNE. About what, for example?

GERMAINE. About what you have done to-day.

ÉTIENNE. But I have nothing to tell you.

GERMAINE [*tenderly*]. Tell me something any way. Come on! Lie just a little bit. You no longer tell me any of those dear little lies that I love to hear.

ÉTIENNE. I have told you everything, I assure you. [*He rises.*]

GERMAINE [*forcing him to sit down again*]. Oh! Don't move. I beg of you. I have n't seen you for an age.

ÉTIENNE. Nonsense! I went out at half past two.

GERMAINE. At two o'clock.

ÉTIENNE. And now it is only six.

GERMAINE. Quarter past six.

ÉTIENNE. Confound it! I am going to miss my train.

GERMAINE. The clock is fast.

ÉTIENNE. What a child you are! No one would believe that you have been married for eight years.

GERMAINE. You are surprised, are n't you, that I have loved you so long? Oh! How glad I am to see you. No one would believe that I live with you, would they?

ÉTIENNE. The fact is . . .

GERMAINE. Have you ever noticed how happy I am when you are in a good humor?

ÉTIENNE [*with a self-satisfied air*]. That's true.

GERMAINE [*admiringly*]. Do you know what you look like? Like a pretty woman who has just received a compliment.

ÉTIENNE. Pass me the matches.

GERMAINE. Are n't you nice to ask me for something! What do you need now? I love to serve you.

ÉTIENNE [*lighting a cigarette*]. Sit down over there, and don't talk any more.

GERMAINE. Oh! Don't look at your papers. You can work *en route.*

ÉTIENNE. You are right. Besides, I don't feel like working this evening.

GERMAINE. And you have a cough.

ÉTIENNE. It is cold in this room.

GERMAINE. With a fire like this? You are joking. It is suffocating.

ÉTIENNE. I am shivering all over. I must warm myself.

GERMAINE. That's right, let us get warm. It's such fun to get warm together.

ÉTIENNE. Yes, let's get warm.

[*They draw near to the fire.*]

GERMAINE. You look tired this evening. I hope you don't feel sick.

ÉTIENNE. Of course not.

GERMAINE. You must pay more attention to your health, Étienne. Sometimes you are imprudent.

ÉTIENNE. Imprudent?

GERMAINE. For example, your suit is too light.

ÉTIENNE. You are mistaken. It is quite heavy enough.

GERMAINE. Not for the month of March.

ÉTIENNE [*yawning*]. Don't worry. I never felt better in my life.

GERMAINE. But you are yawning. You must have indigestion.

ÉTIENNE. I am yawning because it is dinner time. I am hungry.

GERMAINE. I don't care what you say. You are paler than usual.

ÉTIENNE. Let us not talk about my health.

GERMAINE. After all, there is a reason for your lack of color. You have worked hard recently.

ÉTIENNE. That is a mistake. You know well enough that I have n't. Let us not talk about my poor work, or I should scold you. It is lucky that we are rich! Come now, confess the truth. Are you not a little ashamed to see me so changed?

GERMAINE. It annoys me, that's all.

ÉTIENNE. I don't lead the life that I should lead. I go to bed too late and get up too early. That is why I look sick. You need no other explanation to soothe your remorse.

GERMAINE. Do you really think so?

ÉTIENNE. Who would not be worn out under the circumstances? We go out to dinner, we go to parties, we have late suppers, we never have a moment's peace. Last night we reached home at three o'clock . . . and naturally . . .

GERMAINE. And to think that you always say the same thing the next morning! You must always cloud with remorse your slightest pleasures. What do you expect? I am not perfect, yet I can not be sad when . . . If I said that, I should not tell the truth. And then what a mistake it is to imagine that the pleasantest hours are necessarily the most harmful. I don't believe that.

ÉTIENNE. I should say not!

GERMAINE. In any event, it was you who proposed that we go out.

ÉTIENNE. I admit it.

GERMAINE. Well, then.

ÉTIENNE. It is true that we had just quarrelled. Without the quarrel, there would have been no necessity to make it up.

GERMAINE. Even so.

ÉTIENNE. And then, you were wearing that dress which is so becoming to you, and every time that you wear it, I have noticed . . .

GERMAINE. What?

ÉTIENNE. That you can twist me about your finger.

GERMAINE. Nonsense.

ÉTIENNE. So you wear it constantly.

GERMAINE. In gratitude.

ÉTIENNE. Germaine, I beg of you. Don't wear dresses like that. When I see you in that sort of dress, I lose my head.

GERMAINE. Unfortunately, you find it again.

ÉTIENNE. When it is too late.

GERMAINE. The next morning.

ÉTIENNE. Night must end sometime.

GERMAINE [*sadly*]. Ah! Daylight is my enemy. As soon as it appears, you recover your reason, your intelligence, your cruelty. You discover my faults, you criticize my love for you, you become rational. My power ends with daylight, my prestige vanishes and then I find myself face to face with a stranger, a man whom I am not sure to win over again. Ah! Why must that delicious moment melt away when I am really a part of you? How different are your thoughts when our bodies feel the

same thrills! Alas! After that, we are two beings, separated from one another, and sometimes even enemies. What folly!

ÉTIENNE. Perhaps, my darling, if we each had our own room . . .

GERMAINE. Separate rooms? No, I prefer that you hate me when you awake. I want to sleep there, on your shoulder, like a child, all my life. I have thought it all out and I know of no better way of being happy. If you deprive me of those nights, what would be left for us?

ÉTIENNE [*self-satisfied*]. So you are happy when you fall asleep on my shoulder?

GERMAINE. No.

ÉTIENNE. You are not telling the truth.

GERMAINE. Be quiet. You always talk about the happiness you give me and never of the happiness you receive. And yet, idiot, if you loved me as I love you, you can't imagine how happy you would be. I tell you I would n't exchange my lot for yours, in spite of all your unkindness.

ÉTIENNE [*touched*]. I am unkind, am I not?

GERMAINE. Yes, you are.

ÉTIENNE. Do I hurt your feelings and humiliate you?

GERMAINE. You often do.

ÉTIENNE. Poor little girl!

GERMAINE. You see, I am not proud. As soon as you are kind, I complain.

ÉTIENNE. You have reason to. Complain to your heart's content.

GERMAINE. When I am sure of your love, I have no further need of dignity.

ÉTIENNE. Don't stop. You are charming.

GERMAINE. Do you like me?

ÉTIENNE. If you had not suffered, how many delightful things would have remained unsaid!

GERMAINE. All the same, don't make me say too many. Who knows? Happiness might inspire me just as well.

ÉTIENNE. But you may be happy when you wish it.

GERMAINE. When I leave you in peace.

ÉTIENNE. When you agree to be less sentimental. Usually a woman does n't love her husband so much as that.

GERMAINE. My only fault is in having for mine the same feelings that all my friends have for him. What a pity that I am your wife!

ÉTIENNE. Yes, it is unfortunate.

GERMAINE. After all, be fair. It is no crime to be a wife, it is only an accident. Had you not married me, I might have been the dearest mistress of your life.

ÉTIENNE. But you are the most flattering of my conquests.

GERMAINE. I am your virtue, but I might have been your vice, quite as well as any other woman. First of all, you are a lover, you are not a husband. Your rôle in this world is to be in love, eternally in love.

ÉTIENNE [*in a tone of resignation*]. Another Delaunay!

GERMAINE. You would like to change your profession because you are forty-three. Impossible! As long as you live, you will love or you will be loved. One can not escape one's fate.

ÉTIENNE. That's a frightful picture.

GERMAINE. So, if you had a little common sense, instead of avoiding my love most of the time, you would accept it philosophically. If I were you, I should say to myself: "Since Heaven has condemned me to be adored by all women, well, let her have her way. It might as well be she as any one else. After all, she is nice."

ÉTIENNE. And how about the days when I am depressed, or when I am working, or when I am in a bad temper?

GERMAINE. Those days do not matter. You stop for a moment, and smile, and think to yourself: "She is going to be vexed, but she will be so happy later!"

ÉTIENNE. Well then, love me all the same.

GERMAINE. As much as I like?

ÉTIENNE. Yes, but no more.

GERMAINE. You are already afraid.

ÉTIENNE. Do you think this passion of yours will last forever?

GERMAINE. I am afraid so.

ÉTIENNE. So then, your husband will be your sole interest as long as you live?

GERMAINE. Even when I am old, with white hair, I shall care for nothing else. Resign yourself, my poor dear. You are in my blood.

ÉTIENNE [*bursting forth*]. Oh! I adore you.

GERMAINE. Say it again. I am not so sure of that as you.

ÉTIENNE. I adore you. I adore you.

GERMAINE. More than intelligence? More than work?

ÉTIENNE. More than science.

GERMAINE. More than the Florence congress?

ÉTIENNE. The devil take the congress. I am not going.

GERMAINE. Don't talk nonsense. Of course you will go. You have promised.

ÉTIENNE. I shall stay with you.

GERMAINE. I don't want you to. Go and get ready. Since you love me, I shall have no regrets. Don't be silly.

ÉTIENNE. We have never been separated. Let us not begin now.

GERMAINE. Nonsense, Étienne, you don't mean it. You know well enough it is your duty to go.

ÉTIENNE. A lot I care about my duty!

GERMAINE. Besides, it is too late. You have accepted this mission. You must go.

ÉTIENNE. I have accepted it, that is true, but not entirely.

GERMAINE. What a lie!

ÉTIENNE. I reserved the right to withdraw at the last moment. I swear it.

GERMAINE. You did n't tell me so.

ÉTIENNE. I forgot to. I am going to write to the Minister.

GERMAINE. Don't act hastily. Will someone else be appointed in your place?

ÉTIENNE. I shall be delighted for that.

GERMAINE. Don't do it.

ÉTIENNE [*taking up his pen*]. Let me alone.

GERMAINE. Ah! Do not be so kind. In an hour you will hate me.

[*Enter* MADELEINE.]

MADELEINE. Count d'Hérivault to see you, Madame.

ÉTIENNE. Count d'Hérivault?

MADELEINE. That short gentleman who looks so sad.

GERMAINE. One of my suitors. Tell him that I'll see him.

ÉTIENNE [*handing a letter to* MADELEINE]. Madeleine, take a cab and deliver this letter to rue de Grenelle. It is urgent.

MADELEINE. Yes, sir.

[MADELEINE *goes out.*]

GERMAINE. You won't be angry? You won't blame me, will you?

ÉTIENNE. No, I promise you. Don't worry.

GERMAINE. In any case, I don't care. What you think is not important. You are going to stay, I have you, that's the chief thing.

ÉTIENNE. We shall spend the evening together, and we shall be very happy. You will see.

GERMAINE [*about to leave*]. Thank you. [*Returning.*] Are we going to *Lohengrin?*

ÉTIENNE. I am not anxious to. Are you?

GERMAINE. Have you forgotten it is the première? Our two tickets will be wasted.

ÉTIENNE. Give them to someone. Let us not go out. I would rather not.

GERMAINE. My, but you are nice this evening.

ÉTIENNE. Why not? I can't love you except as a lover.

GERMAINE [*gaily*]. What a pity, is n't it?

ÉTIENNE [*alone, gravely*]. Yes, what a pity!

CURTAIN

ACT II

Same setting. On ÉTIENNE'S *desk a half-consumed candle is burning.*

ÉTIENNE [*seated at his desk, alone and preoccupied, studying the time-table*]. Alexandria, Florence, seven fifty-five . . . I should still have time . . . Bah! Let's forget about it, since Moriceau is leaving in my place . . . Moriceau! A fine choice! . . . Oh! These women!

GERMAINE [*at the door, tenderly*]. What? You are alone and you did n't let me know?

ÉTIENNE [*aside*]. Ah! Now I must devote myself to her little heart. [*To* GERMAINE.] What are you looking for?

GERMAINE [*disturbing* ÉTIENNE'S *papers.*] My books. . . . Ah! Here they are.

ÉTIENNE. Be careful, you are going to upset the ink-well.

GERMAINE. Will you allow me to sit down beside you?

ÉTIENNE. Do just as you like.

GERMAINE. Where is my paper-knife?

ÉTIENNE. I have n't touched it.

GERMAINE [*snatching his paper-knife from his hands*]. I shall take yours. Remove that dictionary. It 's in my way.

ÉTIENNE. Are you comfortable?

GERMAINE [*sitting down very close to him*]. I am very comfortable now, thanks. I am very happy.

ÉTIENNE. I am glad of it.

GERMAINE. How about you?

ÉTIENNE. I am happy because you are happy.

GERMAINE. I told Madeleine to serve us here. We shall dine on this little table, as we did night before last. Have you any objections?

ÉTIENNE. Quite the contrary.

GERMAINE. And we shall allow the other servants to go out.

ÉTIENNE. Very well.

GERMAINE. You will sit there, with your back to the fire. If Pascal invites himself, don't give him your place. I am willing to deprive myself of it for you, but not for him.

ÉTIENNE. Oh! We shall not see him again to-day.

GERMAINE. I am certain he will be back.

ÉTIENNE. To wish me a pleasant journey.

GERMAINE. Unless his mistress keeps him.

ÉTIENNE. Which rarely happens.

GERMAINE. It 's hardly likely.

ÉTIENNE. Poor fellow!

GERMAINE. His love affairs are in a bad away. He is going through a crisis.

ÉTIENNE. And he does n't work at all.

[*Pause.* GERMAINE *glances over a novel,* ÉTIENNE *writes.*]

GERMAINE. The gentleman whom I saw a while ago was from the Ministry, was he not?

ÉTIENNE. Yes.

GERMAINE. He did n't bring you bad news, did he?

ÉTIENNE. No.

GERMAINE. Then you have no regrets?

ÉTIENNE. No.

GERMAINE. You have good reason not to be sorry. First of all, you will be warmer to-night than you would have been on the train.

ÉTIENNE. Very true.

GERMAINE. You will not be covered with dust to-morrow morning.

ÉTIENNE. Probably not.

GERMAINE. You will not be all grimy.

ÉTIENNE. No!

GERMAINE. And you will get awake, light-hearted and in a good humor.

ÉTIENNE [*doubtfully*]. Do you think so?

GERMAINE. Do you know how long it requires to go to Florence? Thirty-two hours, my darling.

ÉTIENNE. I have taken longer trips.

GERMAINE. All the same, a journey of thirty-two hours by train is wearisome.

ÉTIENNE. Not always. Sometimes it is restful. I sleep excellently on a train.

GERMAINE [*quickly*]. There! You should have gone this evening, my dear.

ÉTIENNE [*angrily*]. Why do you say that?

GERMAINE. I have no reason.

ÉTIENNE. Come now. Since I have no regrets, don't give me cause to be sorry.

GERMAINE. You are sorry. I know you.

ÉTIENNE. You are mistaken.

GERMAINE. You can't see yourself, my dear. You look as though you were condemned to death.

ÉTIENNE. You devote too much attention to how I look.

GERMAINE. Be truthful. You are angry with me because you have given up your trip.

ÉTIENNE. Not at all! I tell you again you are mistaken. I am very happy to have made that little sacrifice for you.

GERMAINE. That is a kind thought which sounds deucedly like a reproach.

ÉTIENNE. A reproach! What sort of a reproach? Frankly, it would be unfair to blame you. Did you not beg me to go? Rest assured, I have not yet forgotten it and I shall not forget it. If I feel any regret now, well, so much the worse for me! I have only myself to blame, you are in no way responsible. I alone am guilty.

GERMAINE. Oh! That is only your first impulse.

ÉTIENNE. Naturally, on thinking it over, it might have been wise for me to take your advice. That I can't deny. A scientist should defend his theories when he has a chance . . . I have failed to do my duty, that's clear.

GERMAINE. Very clear.

ÉTIENNE. If I could still reconsider my decision . . .

GERMAINE. Why should n't you?

ÉTIENNE. It is too late.

GERMAINE. How do you know?

ÉTIENNE. I am certain of it.

GERMAINE. Don't lose hope. What time does the train leave?

ÉTIENNE. Seven fifty-five.

GERMAINE. No, it is later than that. Let us consult the time-table.

ÉTIENNE. I have just consulted it.

GERMAINE. You have!

ÉTIENNE. Besides, what is the use? Moriceau has just been appointed in my place.

GERMAINE. Dr. Moriceau? Who told you so?

ÉTIENNE. The young man who was here a few minutes ago.

GERMAINE. Moriceau? How was he appointed so quickly?

ÉTIENNE. He happened to be at the Ministry when my letter was delivered.

GERMAINE. He is always hanging about the offices of the Ministers.

ÉTIENNE. He has n't missed his chance.

GERMAINE. Moriceau! A nice choice! His appointment must make you less regretful.

ÉTIENNE [*abruptly*]. Professor Moriceau is an eminent man and I am sure he will succeed in his mission.

GERMAINE. Then, let him beware of me. [*Pause.*]

ÉTIENNE. You see, my dear child, you are not reasonable.

GERMAINE. I am not?

ÉTIENNE. Be careful. You love me a little too much and that unbalances me. It obscures my judgment.

GERMAINE. Back to the old subject.

ÉTIENNE. Your ideas are excellent enough and I am ever ready to admit it, but you always contrive to make them useless to me. Without my being aware of it, and in spite of myself, you make me change my mind.

GERMAINE. What a charge to make!

ÉTIENNE. You create in me a state of mind contrary to the advice that you give and favorable to your inmost desires which you never venture to express.

GERMAINE. I get the better of you.

ÉTIENNE. No. But your sweet words and pretty ways deprive me of my judgment. You fascinate me.

GERMAINE. Why not be frank!

ÉTIENNE. I am weak, I relent and then I make up my mind to do stupid things, injurious to my interests. What has happened to-day, has happened before and will happen again . . . Oh! I am not angry with you. I am merely stating a fact.

GERMAINE. Exactly.

ÉTIENNE. Besides, it seems to be premeditated. I have noticed it, and everyone else as well. Whenever I am offered anything which might be useful or agreeable to me, I am obliged to refuse it because it would offend your love. I don't deny that you have a great deal of affection for your husband, but if you were his enemy, you would not act differently . . . One might say that you have conceived a plan of campaign.

GERMAINE. I have no plan, my dear. I don't understand you.

ÉTIENNE. If you have no plan, it is all the more serious. In that case, there is nothing to be done.

GERMAINE. Don't say anything more. You are going to be unkind.

ÉTIENNE. How little you like the truth!

GERMAINE. Very well. Continue, since you insist on torturing me, but this time, I warn you, I shall have no remorse.

ÉTIENNE [*furiously*]. And why not? When you are to blame for my disappointment?

GERMAINE. I am to blame? Yes, of course . . . I should have had more willpower than you.

ÉTIENNE. Of course you should.

GERMAINE. Punish me for your own weakness.

ÉTIENNE. I exaggerate, I contradict my-

self, I appear to be unjust, as usual, but in your heart you know that I am right.

GERMAINE. That is possible. But how little generosity you show, my dear! . . . How happy you are to reveal to me my faults! How delighted you are when you believe you have a real grievance! Ah! You eagerly seize every opportunity to be angry with me. I told you that in an hour you would hate me.

[*She starts toward the door.*]

ÉTIENNE. Are you going?

GERMAINE. I have no desire to quarrel.

ÉTIENNE. You are going so as not to hear disagreeable things, are n't you?

GERMAINE. Yes, I am.

ÉTIENNE. You run away, as usual, instead of replying. That is the way you argue.

GERMAINE. I have n't your ready tongue.

ÉTIENNE [*taking up his hat*]. You can stay here. I am going out.

GERMAINE. You are going out?

ÉTIENNE. Yes, I shall yield the field to you. My study is at your disposal.

GERMAINE. You will not take dinner here?

ÉTIENNE [*putting on his hat*]. I shall be back in a quarter of an hour.

GERMAINE. Just as you like. I shan't prevent you from going out.

ÉTIENNE. And you don't ask me where I'm going? What a miracle!

GERMAINE. I don't care where you are going.

ÉTIENNE. I have a headache and I am going out to smoke a cigar. You will allow me to, I suppose.

GERMAINE. Smoke two if you like.

ÉTIENNE. You need n't whimper about it.

GERMAINE [*weeping*]. Let me alone.

ÉTIENNE. You wish me to go with a guilty conscience, don't you? All right, I shall stay. [*He takes off his hat.*]

GERMAINE. Oh! Don't sit down again, I beg of you.

ÉTIENNE. I have changed my mind.

GERMAINE. Take your hat and go out. You only stay here to torture me.

ÉTIENNE. It is impossible to criticise you. In a minute your feelings are hurt.

GERMAINE. What do you care about my feelings?

ÉTIENNE. I don't like to see you distressed.

GERMAINE. Ah! Your kindness does n't last long . . . Always the same story! First pity, then reserve, and finally bitterness . . . Are n't you ashamed to be so unkind when you were so affectionate a few moments ago? Your memory is short.

ÉTIENNE. That can't be helped. The hours follow one another and cannot be identical. Our topic of conversation can't always be the same. Otherwise, life would be too monotonous.

GERMAINE. You are right. We can't always talk about love.

ÉTIENNE. I ask nothing better than that we love each other, but let us not talk about it any more, damn it all! Love is not the only thing in life. There is work, the family, children . . .

GERMAINE [*in amazement*]. A child? But I want to be a mother!

ÉTIENNE. A child must be looked after and taken care of.

GERMAINE. Do you mean to say that I am your mistress to such a degree that I could not be a good mother?

ÉTIENNE. Ah! Let us be happy that we have no child. You are a good girl and you would do your duty, but . . .

GERMAINE. But what?

ÉTIENNE. In spite of yourself, you might perhaps blame that poor little baby for depriving you of your share of happiness.

GERMAINE. Blame the poor little one?

ÉTIENNE. Yes, blame the poor little one!

GERMAINE. Wait at least until it comes before you accuse me!

ÉTIENNE. No, we are better off without it.

GERMAINE [*furiously*]. Ah! What a wretched thing it is to love!

ÉTIENNE. Ah! What torture it is to be loved!

[*Enter* PASCAL.]

PASCAL [*abruptly*]. Ah, my dears! How troublesome love is!

ÉTIENNE. What a sight you are! Your cravat is all awry.

PASCAL. I have just had a scene with Mauricette.

ÉTIENNE. Again?

PASCAL. But this time, I punished her well . . .

ÉTIENNE [*in a tone of delight*]. Good for you!

GERMAINE [*to* ÉTIENNE]. That makes you feel better!

PASCAL. Are you going to leave us, Germaine?

GERMAINE [*walking toward the door*]. Talk over your troubles with my husband. He is better able to understand you this evening than I.

ÉTIENNE [*watching her go out*]. Oh!

[GERMAINE *goes out.*]

PASCAL. She is untrue to me, I have proof of it.

ÉTIENNE. You have?

PASCAL. I shall not make up with her. In the first place, she would refuse to . . . See here! Don't leave until to-morrow and I shall go to Italy with you.

ÉTIENNE. I am not going, my dear fellow.

PASCAL. Why not?

ÉTIENNE. Unforeseen business.

PASCAL. What sort of business?

ÉTIENNE. Do you insist on knowing? I gave up the trip through love for my wife, there!

PASCAL. He calls that something unforeseen! What is going to become of me then? I am an unhappy man, Étienne. I need comfort.

ÉTIENNE. You are not the only unfortunate man.

PASCAL. You have quarrelled again with your wife!

ÉTIENNE. You are unhappy, but you can shut yourself in your house and cry all day. You have your independence!

PASCAL. Absolutely.

ÉTIENNE [*becoming angry*]. Independence! Do you understand that glorious word? You can go, come, go upstairs, go downstairs as you please.

PASCAL. Worse luck!

ÉTIENNE. You have not yet lost your right to be alone! Your mistress, your jade of a mistress, deceives you and plays tricks on you. What difference does that make? She is not jealous, aggravating and inquisitive.

PASCAL. I wish she were.

ÉTIENNE [*losing his temper*]. She does not ask you where you are going when you leave the house, nor where you have been when you come home; if you say, I am cold, she does not answer: "Let's get warm."

PASCAL. She does n't even say to me: "Warm yourself."

ÉTIENNE. She does not lean over your shoulder when you write a letter, she does not prowl around you when you talk to a woman. At serious moments, when a decision must be made, she does not destroy your will-power. She does not gain her ends by trifling, vague, insinuating phrases which are apparently harmless, but which lodge in your mind and undermine your courage.

PASCAL. She would n't object if I entered a lion's cage.

ÉTIENNE. On the other hand, if you are a bit more affectionate than usual, she does n't rush into your arms, as thrilled as she was at the first rendezvous.

PASCAL. I have never seen her thrilled.

ÉTIENNE. And if, by chance, you leave her at home and go out to dinner, you do not find her at midnight, awake in bed, impassive, but with choking voice and eyes flashing with jealousy.

PASCAL. What a lucky fellow you are!

ÉTIENNE. See here! Let us not talk about love. I curse it and hate it. You complain of being deceived? Ah, my dear fellow! Sometimes I wish I might be.

PASCAL. I am, but no one likes it, you know.

ÉTIENNE [*taking up a small mirror from the table and gesticulating with it*]. Don't laugh. This is sad, terribly sad. [*Furiously.*] I have that woman's existence in the hollow of my hand! I am as necessary to her as air or light. Have you noticed how happy she looks when I stay at home? My presence is indispensable to her happiness, and even to her life. I would be a wretch to abandon her.

PASCAL [*mockingly*]. What a responsibility!

ÉTIENNE. Damn kindness!

PASCAL. Don't break that mirror. It's unlucky, and besides I like it. Catherine Villiers gave it to you ten years ago, when you were handsome, and it recalls to me your bachelor days.

ÉTIENNE. Does it? I was light-hearted then.

PASCAL. Probably because your mistress loved you less than your wife does.

ÉTIENNE. Or she knew better how to love me. She understood that I was already tired of an irregular life and that I had reached the age to be sensible. Her intelligence made my work a joy. I was a good fellow in those days . . . A dear little companion she was!

PASCAL. Yes, but what a bad actress!

ÉTIENNE. We lived together and yet we agreed. There is no use talking, I was contented.

PASCAL. Domestic bliss!

ÉTIENNE. To think that if she had not been so perfect a companion, I might never have thought of marriage. She was faithful, reasonable, sensible, all that one could desire.

PASCAL. But one fine day you noticed she was lacking in something.

ÉTIENNE. Gradually I began to feel a vague resentment because of her former lovers and only a wife of irreproachable virtue could satisfy me. [*Aside.*] Ass!

PASCAL. Having completed your novitiate, you determined to take holy orders.

ÉTIENNE. You know the rest of the story, because you have suffered by it.

PASCAL. It was at that time that I fell madly in love with a young girl and you consented to make a proposal for me.

ÉTIENNE. I still remember the first interview at her mother's. I had a presentiment of my future unhappiness. How well I recall her embarrassment! I was confused in the presence of that restless creature. I felt that my strength of mind was gone forever.

PASCAL. She loved you on first sight.

ÉTIENNE. My whole being, numbed by three years of hum-drum life, was abruptly awakened. With your permission I married her, and I was amazed by undreamed of happiness.

PASCAL. You wished to do something sensible and obeyed your first impulse.

ÉTIENNE. To me, a mistress had meant a regular life, my wife made my life irregular. When I broke off with an actress, I said good-by to common sense and peace of mind. When I married a young girl, I became the hero of a novel.

PASCAL. You were unlucky.

ÉTIENNE. It would n't have been so bad if I had remained her loving slave! Unfortunately, one fine morning, I opened my books again.

PASCAL. And that day you noticed that Germaine had faults.

ÉTIENNE. It was not my first love-affair. I had been in love before.

PASCAL. Catherine Villiers?

ÉTIENNE. You know it was not she. Someone else.

PASCAL. Before her.

ÉTIENNE. It is a sad fact, but after six months of marriage, I had a consuming desire for work and freedom.

PASCAL. And after eight years of life in common, your wife still loves you madly.

ÉTIENNE. Oh, rather!

PASCAL. There are homes where the stove is only lighted at dinner-time, and in others it burns all day.

ÉTIENNE. Unfortunately.

PASCAL [*looking apprehensively toward the door*]. Be careful! If . . .

ÉTIENNE. Don't worry. She does not hear, or she will pretend she has heard nothing. A person who loves us is not always so eager to learn the truth. That is only a detail, provided that physical presence and possession are assured. You may be bored to death beside her, you may detest her caresses, she does not notice it because she does not wish to. Her cool discretion is as odious as her curiosity.

PASCAL. Come now. Don't be so nervous, you make yourself more violent than you really are. You like her all the same.

ÉTIENNE. Yes, at times.

PASCAL. Poseur! I have seen you infatuated, absolutely infatuated.

ÉTIENNE. Sometimes.

PASCAL. At all events, you often seem to be.

ÉTIENNE. I seem to be by force of habit.

PASCAL. Well, you should change it. And by the way, I must tell you something. From your life as a gay Lothario, you have retained with your wife, as well as with other women, an attractive manner, affectations, captivating ways and certain tricks which invite and provoke love, and consequently jealousy. You must realize, my dear fellow, that your capricious tenderness often borders closely on passion. In spite of all her injured feelings and your conjectures, Germaine imagines, and has a right to imagine, that you really love her. What remains of your happiness rests upon a misunderstanding. If you ever banish it, you will be responsible for a catastrophe.

ÉTIENNE. Perhaps you are right.

PASCAL [*taking up his hat*]. Poor little woman!

[MADELEINE *enters, carrying the dinner on a tray. She lays the cloth and places dishes and silver on a small table while* ÉTIENNE *and* PASCAL *finish their conversation.*]

ÉTIENNE. You are leaving?

PASCAL. Are you going to have dinner?

ÉTIENNE. I have n't even spoken to you of your troubles. Forgive me.

PASCAL. My troubles are less important than yours.

ÉTIENNE. Where are you going? To Mauricette's?

PASCAL. For a change.

ÉTIENNE. That should be so, since you have broken off.

PASCAL. And yet, she is not an ideal mistress.

ÉTIENNE. The ideal mistress is the one that can be got rid of.

MADELEINE [*interrupting and handing a card to* ÉTIENNE]. This lady would like to see you for a moment.

ÉTIENNE [*aside, reading*]. Catherine Villiers! [*To* MADELEINE.] Ask her to come in.

[MADELEINE *goes out.* ÉTIENNE *hands the card to* PASCAL.]

PASCAL. Catherine? Well, well!

ÉTIENNE. What can she wish of me at this hour?

PASCAL. Perhaps a mind-reader has told her that you were sad and she is coming to console you.

ÉTIENNE. Stay with me.

[*Enter* CATHERINE VILLIERS.]

ÉTIENNE. You arrive opportunely. I was talking about you.

CATHERINE [*carrying a small bag*]. You always say that, even after ten years.

PASCAL. It's true, on his word of honor. We were talking about our love-affairs. We were sympathizing with one another, I with him and he . . . with himself.

ÉTIENNE. I was saying that your charming qualities had led me as a matter of course to marry.

CATHERINE. Then they are qualities which brought me little happiness.

PASCAL. He would still be a bachelor had he not known you.

CATHERINE [*to* ÉTIENNE]. Well, between ourselves, I could easily imagine that you still are.

PASCAL [*gaily*]. And together once more!

ÉTIENNE. All three of us.

CATHERINE. As in the good old times.

ÉTIENNE. It's funny.

PASCAL [*to* ÉTIENNE]. Rake!

CATHERINE. All the same, it seems queer to me to be in this house.

ÉTIENNE. Yet this is not the first time.

PASCAL. Ho ho!

ÉTIENNE. Oh! Once last year.

CATHERINE. And I have no intention of forming the habit.

ÉTIENNE. I know Catherine. She must have a good reason to come to see me at seven in the evening.

CATHERINE. Of course.

ÉTIENNE. Sit down and tell me what you wish.

CATHERINE [*putting out the candle on the desk*]. Will you allow me? The socket is going to break.

ÉTIENNE. There now! What a wife she would have been!

PASCAL. What a treasure in a family!

ÉTIENNE. Now, go ahead. I am listening.

CATHERINE. It is professional advice that I want.

PASCAL. You know very well he does not practice.

ÉTIENNE. Pay no attention to him.

PASCAL. Am I de trop?

CATHERINE. Good gracious! Of course not.

ÉTIENNE. Tell me what you wish.

CATHERINE. I lunched to-day with the Marcottes and I learned that you are leaving for Florence this evening.

ÉTIENNE. I am not going.

CATHERINE. That's too bad.

ÉTIENNE. Why?

CATHERINE. I came to ask you a favor.

ÉTIENNE. What?

CATHERINE. A friend of mine is sick down at Pisa.

ÉTIENNE. Oh!

CATHERINE. Very sick, and you could help him.

ÉTIENNE. Who is it?

CATHERINE. We are old friends, are n't we, Étienne? I can tell you his name.

ÉTIENNE. Carrington?

CATHERINE. Yes.

PASCAL. You have n't changed then?

CATHERINE. Not for eight years.

PASCAL. Good Lord!

ÉTIENNE. Be quiet, will you! . . . Well, Dr. Moriceau is going in my place. Do you wish a note to him?

CATHERINE. Yes. Please give it to me anyway.

ÉTIENNE. How becoming that little coat is!

CATHERINE. It's from an English shop.

ÉTIENNE. It tries you, and does not find you wanting.

PASCAL. You are still twenty-five!

ÉTIENNE [*sitting down to write*]. You are a marvel. Not one wrinkle.

PASCAL. You have n't changed a bit.

CATHERINE. That is due to proper care of my health and a quiet life. One does not grow old when . . .

PASCAL. When one is born sensible.

CATHERINE. Always complimentary.

PASCAL. How about the stage? We have n't seen your name on the bill-boards this winter.

CATHERINE. I spend all my time in Italy.

PASCAL. You have n't retired, have you?

CATHERINE. I am a nurse.

PASCAL. Don't you get tired of living with a man, day and night?

CATHERINE. Domestic life is the only life I can lead.

ÉTIENNE. Are you going to the première of *Lohengrin* this evening?

CATHERINE. No. I was at the rehearsal yesterday.

ÉTIENNE. How did you like it?

CATHERINE. Huge success.

ÉTIENNE [*rising*]. Then I shan't offer you my seats.

CATHERINE. Keep them. I have seen the opera.

ÉTIENNE [*handing her a letter*]. Here, my dear. When are you going back?

CATHERINE. To-morrow or day after to-morrow.

ÉTIENNE. Moriceau will reach Florence before you. At his house they will tell you his address there.

CATHERINE [*putting the letter in her bag*]. I understand. Thank you.

PASCAL. You are dropping something.

CATHERINE. Ah! My keys.

ÉTIENNE. Jove! What an array!

PASCAL [*to* CATHERINE, *returning her keys to her*]. You must lock up the sugar.

CATHERINE. I have to when you are around. [*To* ÉTIENNE.] Do you still work hard?

ÉTIENNE. Less than I used to.

PASCAL [*to* CATHERINE, *jokingly*]. Oh, yes! The little sprees on rue La Bruyère!

CATHERINE. The third-floor apartment.

PASCAL. Until ten o'clock in the evening.

ÉTIENNE. They were nice.

PASCAL. A desk and a needle! He used to write and you used to sew.

ÉTIENNE. That was our practice.

PASCAL. I have seen you cut out his flannel shirts.

CATHERINE. Don't make me feel unhappy.

ÉTIENNE [*in a melancholy tone*]. Now I wear silk shirts.

PASCAL. I shall leave you alone.

CATHERINE. It's no use.

PASCAL [*about to leave*]. Your wife is waiting for me, I think. Now that you

have nothing further to say to each other, you must want to chat together.

CATHERINE. Au revoir, Pascal.

PASCAL [*stopping*]. I am going.

CATHERINE. As in the good old times.

ÉTIENNE. It's funny.

PASCAL [*stopping at the door*]. Now be sensible! [PASCAL *goes out.*]

ÉTIENNE. Stay a moment.

CATHERINE [*about to leave*]. Your dinner is about to be served. I am inconveniencing you.

ÉTIENNE. No. We have dinner here at any hour.

CATHERINE. That is bad for the digestion.

ÉTIENNE. I have lost my good habits.

CATHERINE. Do you remember at the time of your marriage? I had given you a little programme of hygiene and discreet conduct to follow.

ÉTIENNE. Do I remember? I have kept them most carefully in a drawer, those instructions in your own hand-writing. Everything is provided for, hours of work, walks, meals . . .

CATHERINE. Interests.

ÉTIENNE. Diversions.

CATHERINE. You have kept them, but you have n't followed them.

ÉTIENNE. Alas! This house is not a temple of wisdom.

CATHERINE [*glancing at the table set for dinner*]. I need only look around to be sure of it. Do you often dine in this way?

ÉTIENNE. Quite frequently.

CATHERINE. Ah!

ÉTIENNE. These newfangled ways would n't tempt you, would they?

CATHERINE. Perhaps once in a long while, but for steady diet I confess that I prefer a comfortable, well-lighted dining-room with an ordinary round table.

ÉTIENNE. I agree with you, my dear girl.

CATHERINE. I am bourgeoise. I like regular habits.

ÉTIENNE. I can still see your dining-room table under a large porcelain lamp-shade, with your silver-gilt napkin ring, and little pill boxes beside your glass, for health has always had an important place in your life. You used to watch out for the tonics on the fourth page of the newspapers and you would say to me in the evening: "Doctor, do you think I might try that one?"

CATHERINE. You are making fun of me.

ÉTIENNE [*affectionately*]. Those were happy days!

CATHERINE [*moving away from the table*]. All the same, I shall move away from it. Your dinner is tempting, served on a little table in the corner, adorably hidden by a screen, the champagne, and flowers, but it suggests debauchery and dissipation and reminds me of my own early days.

ÉTIENNE. With someone other than myself.

CATHERINE. Caviar, Russian salad! I never thought that of you! You were certainly more sensible ten years ago, my dear.

ÉTIENNE. I was younger ten years ago.

CATHERINE. How mournfully you say it! [*Pause.*] Are n't you . . . ?

ÉTIENNE [*interrupting*]. I am happy, but I am tormented and bewildered. I am wasting my time and . . . You must understand . . . With you at least . . .

CATHERINE. Do you mean that you slept with me and nothing more?

ÉTIENNE. I mean that our life was not on a sentimental basis.

CATHERINE. So that's the trouble. [*Pause.*] What do you expect? We both knew something of life before we met, and your wife was ignorant of everything when you married her. We have had our share, it is only fair that she should have hers.

ÉTIENNE. I don't see the necessity for that.

CATHERINE. Good-by, and don't be too unhappy.

ÉTIENNE [*handing her her bag*]. You are forgetting your bag.

CATHERINE. How you frightened me!

ÉTIENNE. Does it contain valuables?

CATHERINE. I have just been to see my broker.

ÉTIENNE. You have a broker now?

CATHERINE. I even have two.

ÉTIENNE. That's safer.

CATHERINE. You're right!

[CATHERINE *goes out.*]

[*Enter* GERMAINE.]

GERMAINE [*playfully*]. May I come back?

ÉTIENNE. Why not?

GERMAINE. Am I going to find a pleasant or a disagreeable man?

ÉTIENNE. That depends.

GERMAINE. Oh! Scolding already.

ÉTIENNE. Let us sit down for dinner.

GERMAINE. Beg my pardon first. [*She leans forward. He touches her neck with his lips.*] Not a real kiss, but I forgive you all the same.

ÉTIENNE [*sitting down at the dinner table*]. What have you done with Pascal?

GERMAINE. Nothing. He left long ago. He only stayed a moment with me. [*She sits down.*]

ÉTIENNE. He has gone to patch up his quarrel.

GERMAINE. Pass me the caviar.

ÉTIENNE [*grumbling*]. Is n't there any soup?

GERMAINE. You ordered the dinner yourself.

ÉTIENNE. Did Pascal tell you who was here?

GERMAINE. Mademoiselle Villiers.

ÉTIENNE. Her friend Carrington is dying at Pisa and she came to ask me to run over and see him while in Florence.

GERMAINE. She knew that you were going?

ÉTIENNE. She lunched this morning with the Marcottes.

GERMAINE. What was the necessity of applying to you? What impertinence!

ÉTIENNE. But I am a doctor and I was going to be near-by. And then, after ten years! . . . Catherine is no longer a young woman.

GERMAINE. She is still on the stage.

ÉTIENNE. Very little!

GERMAINE. Does she look as commonplace as ever?

ÉTIENNE. She still has her clear complexion and glossy hair.

GERMAINE. One would never believe her an actress.

ÉTIENNE. That's true. You look more like an actress than she.

GERMAINE. How her apartment must shine!

ÉTIENNE. She was a good housekeeper.

GERMAINE. Everything neatly arranged in drawers, I suppose?

ÉTIENNE. I can't help it. I like system.

GERMAINE. I can just see her wardrobe with nice little piles of linen.

ÉTIENNE. And packages of lavender.

GERMAINE. Exactly.

ÉTIENNE. Give me some bread, spiteful.

GERMAINE. Take a little champagne, old husband. [*Pause.*] Lord Carrington is rich, is he not?

ÉTIENNE. Millionaire. And he will never be ruined by the dresses of his mistress. She dresses so plainly . . .

GERMAINE. I am more expensive for you.

ÉTIENNE. She was wearing a dress worth practically nothing.

GERMAINE. My dear, when a woman is with a millionaire, she buys title-deeds, not dresses.

ÉTIENNE. Oh! There is too much pepper in this salad.

GERMAINE. Too much! That's what you say about everything. What unpleasant news did she tell you?

ÉTIENNE. Nothing. Ah, yes! She was at yesterday's rehearsal of *Lohengrin*.

GERMAINE. Did it go off all right?

ÉTIENNE. Wonderfully.

GERMAINE. Really!

ÉTIENNE. The première will be magnificent, and I am delighted I am going. Let us hurry with dinner.

GERMAINE. But, you poor dear, we are not going. [*She laughs.*]

ÉTIENNE. Why not?

GERMAINE. Because I have . . . Have you forgotten?

ÉTIENNE. Forgotten what?

GERMAINE. I have given away the tickets.

ÉTIENNE [*angrily*]. A nice thing to do!

GERMAINE. That was our agreement. You told me so yourself.

ÉTIENNE. I said that without thinking. . . . You did n't lose any time! And to whom did you give them?

GERMAINE. To Count d'Hérivault.

ÉTIENNE. To that little idiot?

GERMAINE. Yes, when he was here a little while ago.

ÉTIENNE. Without a moment's consideration! . . . Frankly, it would have been better to give the opportunity to someone more intelligent. For example, Mademoiselle Villiers had no tickets. If I had wanted to stay at home this evening, I should have offered her mine.

GERMAINE. But she is the last person in the world to whom you could give them.

ÉTIENNE. That goes without saying, and I should not have done so. However, that is not the question. What a pity! I am out of luck to-day.

GERMAINE. But I never expected you to be disappointed. How could I have foreseen that you would be annoyed?

ÉTIENNE [*stupidly*]. I have a right to like music!

GERMAINE. We had decided to not go out.

ÉTIENNE. That is not an argument. There was no necessity for such haste.

GERMAINE. You had promised the evening to me.

ÉTIENNE. A man might be given a chance to change his mind, confound it! You don't lose any time! You are always the same, and in the bargain, you laugh in my face and make a fool of me.

GERMAINE. But you make such a wry face!

ÉTIENNE. You think I'm cornered, don't you? You think that's a joke. Very well! We shall spend the evening together. Ah! What a life!

GERMAINE. Back to the same subject! You wish to hurt my feelings again.

ÉTIENNE. And do you think that I have no feelings? I am ill-tempered, I admit, but I am unhappy.

GERMAINE. You are unhappy? Impossible! How am I to blame?

ÉTIENNE. Now don't force me to speak.

GERMAINE. Explain yourself, I am growing tired of this. What is the matter?

ÉTIENNE [*rising furiously and throwing his napkin on the table*]. The trouble is that I have had enough of it, that I have reached the limit of my patience and that I rebel. Yes, I am tired of your all-absorbing and exaggerated affection, of your gentleness as a cloak for your tyranny and of your sentimental persecution. I am stifling, morally and physically. I wish to be free.

GERMAINE. You are free.

ÉTIENNE [*with hatred and rage*]. No, because I never follow my fancy, for if I sometimes do what I wish, I never do what I like, what I dream of doing. I only have liberty when I snatch it or steal it. Not even with your consent do I possess it, but as a result of my own egoism and cruelty. Alas! I have a guilty air when I am happy. It would seem that my pleasures are unworthy acts. Be frank. Your jealousy ill accords with my outbursts of independence and each time I pay the penalty for them with your tears, your hysteria and your accusations.

GERMAINE [*rising*]. Be silent, that's abominable. I know what you are going to say. Not another word!

ÉTIENNE. When I think that I have reached the point of writing my letters in some café in order to avoid questions; of leaving the house without reason or object in order to escape your tyranny, by an instinct of self-preservation! God forbid that I fall ill, I should be your prisoner! Never have I seen such relationship between man and woman. I spend my life in trying to evade you, you spend yours in trying to capture me. What do you care for my ambitions and my dreams? You understand nothing about them. When am I able to work here? Every hour is consumed by quarrels and reconciliations. And yet my falsehoods avert many storms.

GERMAINE. Your falsehoods?

ÉTIENNE. Yes, I often lie to you. I conceal the truth and distort a lot of things.

GERMAINE. For the sake of peace?

ÉTIENNE. It's your own fault. Thanks to your suspicious nature, deception has become a part of my life, and to such a degree that if I took a mistress to-morrow, my habits would remain precisely the same.

GERMAINE. Ah! I realize that you are the most unfortunate of men, but when one is such a coward, he need not be pitied.

ÉTIENNE. Insult me if you like. This

time, you will not profit by my anger, I warn you. You will not succeed in gaining thereby a coddling repentance, an hour of tender self-humiliation. Besides, my fit of anger is only a detail and all your tears will not change things. It is not what I say, but the reason for it, that is serious.

GERMAINE. Yes, the reason for it.

ÉTIENNE. I am your husband, you are my wife, and I should yield. I shall never have the courage to leave you, shall I? I know myself too well. Then why should I make a fuss? I might as well accept the inevitable at once. I belong to you, therefore you have the right to spy on my movements, verify my statements, scrutinize my gestures and ransack my brain as well as the drawers of my desk. You can cross-question me, commend or censure me, if you like, and as much as you like. I can only bow my head, for this house is yours, this furniture is yours, my books are yours. My fortune, my name, my friendships and my hatreds belong to us both. Nothing is exclusively mine! You have the right to interrupt my work, to sit down at my study table, to pursue me from one room to another, and to force upon me your presence, your conversation and your effusions. That is your right!

GERMAINE. It is not by virtue of a right, my dear, but because I love you.

ÉTIENNE. None the less, I am your victim, and have been for eight years.

GERMAINE. For eight years?

ÉTIENNE. Yes, and my torture is not ended.

GERMAINE. How infamous!

ÉTIENNE. For many years to come, we shall have to perform together all the acts of daily life, including the most grotesque, commingling our habits, our interests and our deceptions. We are condemned one to the other and we shall talk about love eternally, every day.

GERMAINE. And every night.

ÉTIENNE. What difference does night make to me! I would rather give up my body than my mind.

GERMAINE. But you are more obliging at night. It's surprising.

ÉTIENNE. Perhaps I should welcome those hours if you did not always anticipate me.

GERMAINE. That is a lie.

ÉTIENNE. If you did not lessen their worth by your over-ready consent, if sometimes you would wait to be coaxed.

GERMAINE. I forbid you to continue.

ÉTIENNE. Ah! You are right. You are not proud.

GERMAINE. You lie I say. That is an outrageous lie. It is not my desire that craves a favor, it is yours. Yes, it is you who . . .

ÉTIENNE. Because you are sad, . . . because I have yielded.

GERMAINE. Because you are kind?

ÉTIENNE. Yes, very often my caresses are a surrender.

GERMAINE [*unable to control herself*]. You wretch! You knew I loved you. You should not have married me.

ÉTIENNE. I made a mistake.

GERMAINE [*with sorrow and indignation*]. You had passed thirty and I was twenty. You should have thought of the consequences, especially since you must be so uncompromising. I told you I adored you. Why did you marry me? Why have you been kind and indulgent? Why have you allowed me to believe that you loved me? Why have you lied to me and deceived me? Why were you not cruel at the very outset? Why have you waited so long to tell me the truth?

ÉTIENNE. I have made a mistake.

GERMAINE. Now I see. You are at heart only a bundle of conceit, a ladies' man. You wished to be loved.

ÉTIENNE. Yes, but not so much as that!

GERMAINE. I have given you more than you asked for?

ÉTIENNE. Precisely.

GERMAINE. Poor man! I love you too much and you do not love me enough, that's my sin.

ÉTIENNE. That is the cause of our misery.

GERMAINE. It makes little difference! This love that you discard now, this love which you besmirch, since you have encouraged and shared it, you have lost the right to reproach me for it.

ÉTIENNE. I admit that.

GERMAINE. And besides, even granting that you have neither encouraged nor shared it, in what respect can I be blamed? Should I not love you simply because I am your wife? Because I have offered to you my virtue, my youth and my devotion, because I did not belong to ten men before I met you, am I to be forbidden to speak of love to you? You men refuse to hear from your wives what you beseech and implore from the lowest of prostitutes. But I am no less attractive because I belong to you alone and I lose nothing because my love is greater than yours!

ÉTIENNE. You are entirely right.

GERMAINE. Alas! Young girls should be told that love and marriage are two different things, which cannot be reconciled. They would make their choice before or they would follow your example, they would love first and marry afterwards. You married me, did you not, to keep house for you, supervise your servants and cool at times the fever of your desire? I am a sort of servant here. Ah! You understand love as a passing fancy, a diversion, as a gentlemanly adornment; but in marriage, in that placid manner of life, where one takes care of one's self, plans for the future and becomes absorbed in one's success and career, you consider it out of place, and if you dared to, you would call it immodest. But my poor fellow, remember this. If I had been obliged to marry for money or position, I should not have married you.

ÉTIENNE. And why not?

GERMAINE. I could easily have made a better match. My fortune, my name and my age allowed me to wait and take my choice. I refused men more wealthy, of better social position and better known than you.

ÉTIENNE. I am sorry you did.

GERMAINE. In my eyes you have never been a savant. You are the man I love.

ÉTIENNE. It is your egoism that makes you say so.

GERMAINE. A marriage of convenience with you? That is out of the question. If that is what you propose to me to-day, it is too late, my dear.

ÉTIENNE. So much the worse for us, then.

GERMAINE. It is too late, because for the last eight years, whether based on lies or not, love has been the sole interest in my life. A marriage of convenience? You offer me an attractive future! That would suit you to perfection. Our life would be something like this. Day and night you would shut yourself up in this room with your old papers and I would remain alone or cultivate the acquaintance of people who might be useful to you. We should be like other married people. We should talk of money, and of our health; when hard pressed, I should accept your caresses, but without loving you. And without love to absolve us, we should be joined, bound to one another physically and morally, until death. And you would be that man and I should be that woman? Never. It's repellent, and I feel only pity for two persons who live like that. They are not two friends who sustain one another, they are two partners who plot together.

ÉTIENNE. Not always. You exaggerate.

GERMAINE. For my part, I repeat, I reject such a wretched union, and I shall remain as I am, with love in my heart and sentimental. I have a higher regard for myself with the faults that you condemn than with the qualities you demand.

ÉTIENNE. You have a high opinion of yourself!

GERMAINE. I torment you and monopolize you and disconcert you incessantly, I admit. I am despotic, jealous, exasperating, I confess. My intelligence is in agreement with you, but my body and my heart protest, accuse you and see your injustice. You see, suffering is more keen than one's reasoning power. And then, how insignificant is the awkwardness of my love compared with the poverty of yours! Am I not a true and faithful wife? Have I not consoled you in your hours of depression? Should I be so distrustful and troublesome if you did not delight in encouraging my anxieties by your coquetterie and indifference? Should I be so ridiculous if you did not hurt my feelings in the presence of people by your continual sarcasm? Be

more sympathetic with me, and I shall be less absurd. Teach me to love you, since I do not know how. Tell me not to worry, treat me as a comrade, don't be always preoccupied, devote a little time to me as you might to a child, and then you will see, I shall be reasonable, sensible, and even practical. You will find the life of every day less burdensome, I shall respect your work and perhaps you will be happy . . . And I thought that you were!

[*She bursts into tears. Pause.*]

ÉTIENNE. Come now. Don't cry.

GERMAINE. I used to say to myself, he does n't love me as much as I love him, but he likes to have me near him. I was mistaken. Have you nothing to say? Have you no reply?

ÉTIENNE. What can I reply to you? All that you say is true and I pity you with all my heart. But I am forty-three. It is not that I hate you, but that I must protect my work. In spite of all you do and say, one loves as one can. Damn it! One can't be infatuated all the time!

GERMAINE. Your heart does not say that, I am sure of it. That's impossible. Now, tell me the truth, you love another woman.

ÉTIENNE [*raising his hands to heaven*]. Good Lord! No!

GERMAINE. So I am to believe you no longer love me, that you have never loved me? My happiness rested upon a misunderstanding, I was duped. . . . What a terrible discovery to make!

ÉTIENNE. There now.

GERMAINE. Even in the first months, I have had from you only pity and a semblance of love.

ÉTIENNE. I do not say that.

GERMAINE. You see I have good reason not to believe you!

ÉTIENNE. I beg of you.

GERMAINE. Are n't you perhaps mistaken in your own feelings? Just think for a moment . . . Do you still love me a little?

ÉTIENNE. How can I answer?

GERMAINE. Is it all over, yes or no?

ÉTIENNE [*harshly*]. And suppose it were?

GERMAINE. Can you propose such a thing?

ÉTIENNE. Let us admit that I have changed, let us admit that I am no longer the same man. In spite of your youth, your beauty, your integrity and all your good qualities, let us admit that after eight years of married life, I have reached a state of complete and absolute indifference . . . what then?

GERMAINE. What then?

ÉTIENNE. How could I be blamed? I am not responsible for my feelings. You have the right to know what I do, but not what I think. My inmost thoughts do not concern you, they concern no one. I was ridiculous a while ago when I denied this. My brain belongs to me, my brain is mine!

GERMAINE. Very true, I yield the point. But since I have lost you, since the deception in which I have lived cannot continue, since the illusion is destroyed, my life is ended. I have no further reason to live. I may as well kill myself.

ÉTIENNE. You are mad.

GERMAINE. I know I am.

ÉTIENNE. Kill yourself?

GERMAINE. Yes, I shall kill myself.

ÉTIENNE [*ironically*]. For so little as that?

GERMAINE. For so little as that.

ÉTIENNE. Incredible! Can't you be satisfied with the lot of all women? We are bound to each other by marriage. Let us not try to escape.

GERMAINE. My share of happiness has been greater, or at least I thought it was greater, than that of other women. I don't care to have less.

ÉTIENNE. But if you killed yourself, people would say . . . !

GERMAINE. That I had played a mean trick on you, would n't they?

ÉTIENNE. You can efface yourself without committing suicide.

GERMAINE. You mean to remain here without suffering or thinking? Stifle my heart for your convenience? Alas! I cannot. I prefer to be dead.

ÉTIENNE. To kill yourself! After all, it is logical. It is the inevitable consequence of your mania for loving. Nothing was lacking but that you should die like the heroine of a novel. You are a perfect type.

GERMAINE [*with scorn and fury*]. I should n't kill myself for such a brute as you. Don't worry, my dear. I shan't embitter your life by an unpleasant memory, and henceforth, I promise you, you will know nothing of my sorrows.

ÉTIENNE. I am glad to hear it.

GERMAINE. You have the upper hand today because your heart is cold, but beware, life has odd turns. Some day I can put an irreparable barrier between us, and on that day, it is you who will be unhappy and ridiculous.

ÉTIENNE [*shrugging his shoulders*]. When that day comes . . .

GERMAINE. You will not have to endure me long, I promise you . . . Ah! You find me a burden! Well, someone will relieve you of me.

ÉTIENNE. You threaten me?

GERMAINE. Yes, I threaten you.

ÉTIENNE. So then you propose to me two alternatives: "You must be infatuated with me or I shall be unfaithful to you . . ." I am exceedingly sorry, my dear child, but the choice is not in my hands.

GERMAINE. Be silent, Étienne. Don't goad me on! You do not know me. I am capable of anything.

ÉTIENNE [*taking up his hat*]. That is for you to decide! In the meantime, I am going out to dinner.

GERMAINE [*despairingly*]. Étienne.

ÉTIENNE [*putting on his hat*]. Good evening. It is not enough to have the will to deceive one's husband, little girl. One must also have the desire.

GERMAINE. Beware!

[*Enter* PASCAL.]

ÉTIENNE [*furiously, to* PASCAL]. Ah, my good fellow! You are just in time. Since you adore my wife, console her. I am done with her. Take her off my hands.

PASCAL. Are you crazy? What is the meaning of such madness.

ÉTIENNE [*going out violently*]. Good night. [ÉTIENNE *goes out.*]

GERMAINE [*with indignation and despair*]. Ah! The wretch! The idiot! The brute!

PASCAL. He deserves every bit of that!

GERMAINE. What a pity a man does n't suffer more by his wife's infidelity! He offers me to you, my dear. Take advantage of his generosity.

PASCAL. You mean you would take me as your lover?

GERMAINE. If not you, someone else, I give you my word.

PASCAL. Come, Germaine. Calm yourself and don't tempt me.

GERMAINE. I will deceive him! I will, I tell you!

PASCAL. Well, if you are determined to do something rash . . .

GERMAINE. Wretch that he is!

PASCAL. I might as well be . . .

GERMAINE. The brute!

PASCAL. The guardian of the dishonor of his home.

GERMAINE. Don't joke about it, Pascal. This is more serious than you imagine.

PASCAL. Ah! Be silent. Perhaps I still love you.

GERMAINE [*distracted*]. I don't care whether you love me or not!

CURTAIN

ACT III

Same setting. A somewhat neater room. ÉTIENNE *at his desk,* PASCAL *standing near the fire-place;* MADELEINE *about to place on a table a tray with a bottle and several glasses. Long pause.*

MADELEINE [*to* PASCAL]. Shall I put on another log?

PASCAL [*absent-mindedly*]. The fire is hot enough, thanks.

MADELEINE [*poking the logs*]. You don't feel the cold so much now, sir.

PASCAL. One changes.

MADELEINE. I know something about that.

PASCAL. By the way, what are you doing with your painter these days?

MADELEINE. I dare n't tell you.

PASCAL. Be careful. You have a nice figure. Don't spoil it.

MADELEINE. Bah! That would mean another little recruit for the army.

PASCAL. Or a grisette . . .

ÉTIENNE [*aside*]. A promising future!

[MADELEINE *goes out. Long pause.*]

ÉTIENNE [*stopping his writing*]. No, I am certainly not in good trim to-day. [*To* PASCAL.] Have you nothing to say? Why don't you talk?

PASCAL. I am warming myself while I wait for Germaine.

ÉTIENNE [*rising*]. You trifle with my maid and find nothing to say to me?

PASCAL. You are working.

ÉTIENNE. Usually your conversation is a pleasant interruption.

PASCAL. That depends on the day.

ÉTIENNE [*going to him*]. My, but you are serious!

PASCAL [*dissembling*]. I? Not at all.

ÉTIENNE [*with jealousy*]. What is the matter?

PASCAL. Nothing.

ÉTIENNE. Mauricette?

PASCAL. Yes, Mauricette.

ÉTIENNE. On your honor?

PASCAL [*embarrassed*]. You are silly.

ÉTIENNE [*pouring out some wine*]. Will you take some?

PASCAL [*refusing*]. No, thanks.

ÉTIENNE. It's your Malaga?

PASCAL. I see it is.

ÉTIENNE. And you won't have any?

PASCAL. I have lost my taste for it.

ÉTIENNE. You have bad judgment. It is better since it has been racked.

PASCAL. So are many people. [*Pause.*] Are you going to start work again?

ÉTIENNE [*sitting down*]. Yes, I have a lot on hand.

PASCAL. What are you doing?

ÉTIENNE. I am finishing my article for the *Archives*.

PASCAL. Getting along nicely?

ÉTIENNE [*writing*]. Fairly well.

[*Enter* GERMAINE.]

GERMAINE [*to* PASCAL]. Were you waiting for me?

PASCAL. It is five o'clock. You see I am punctual.

ÉTIENNE. That is a virtue you will never lose.

PASCAL. With whom have you been?

GERMAINE. With Monsieur and Madame Crozat.

ÉTIENNE. Has there been a reconciliation?

GERMAINE. Her husband has forgiven her.

ÉTIENNE [*writing*]. These are queer times! Every woman that one meets has been forgiven for infidelity by her husband.

PASCAL. How old is Crozat?

ÉTIENNE. Sixty-seven.

GERMAINE. Just dear papa's age.

PASCAL. He kisses on the forehead.

ÉTIENNE [*jealously*]. A younger man would be less obliging.

PASCAL. Unless he loved his wife, unless she were indispensable to him.

ÉTIENNE [*continuing his writing*]. With a little sense, nothing is indispensable.

[*Pause.*]

PASCAL [*to* GERMAINE]. Are you coming?

ÉTIENNE. Where are you going?

PASCAL. To the Art Club.

GERMAINE. I am not sure that I am going out.

PASCAL. Have you changed your mind?

GERMAINE [*taking off her cloak*]. Perhaps . . .

PASCAL [*discouraged*]. One can never count on what she will do.

ÉTIENNE. Poor Pascal!

[MADELEINE *enters.*]

MADELEINE [*to* ÉTIENNE]. Could you come here, sir, for a moment?

ÉTIENNE. What is the matter?

MADELEINE. The decorator wants to know where the pictures are to be hung in your room.

ÉTIENNE. Suppose you attend to that, Germaine?

GERMAINE [*picking up a book and seating herself*]. Oh, I have more confidence in your taste than in mine.

ÉTIENNE [*to* MADELEINE]. Tell him I shall see him. [*To* PASCAL.] Since the other day we have separate rooms.

GERMAINE. It's excellent for the brain.

ÉTIENNE [*to* PASCAL]. She sulks.

PASCAL [*aside*]. Not yet unfaithful to me.

ÉTIENNE [*to* MADELEINE]. Please mail these letters.

MADELEINE. Yes, sir.

ÉTIENNE. And put some ink in this inkwell.

MADELEINE [*aside*]. They have it filled before throwing it at each other.

GERMAINE [*to* MADELEINE *who is about to carry off her cloak*]. Leave my cloak there.

[MADELEINE *goes out,* ÉTIENNE *rises and starts toward the door.*]

ÉTIENNE [*to* GERMAINE, *turning around*]. If you go out, don't be too late in coming back. We are dining this evening with the Henriets.

GERMAINE. Go without me, will you? I shall spend my evening beside the fire.

PASCAL. I shall come to keep you company.

GERMAINE. You need n't.

ÉTIENNE [*to* GERMAINE]. You won't be sorry if I leave you alone?

GERMAINE. I shall be just sorry enough.

ÉTIENNE [*ironically*]. How submissive you are! Truly, in a week you have changed entirely.

GERMAINE. You will see. Before long I shall be perfect.

ÉTIENNE. Oh! You are not far from perfection. You have all the good qualities now.

PASCAL [*aside*]. I am not responsible for that.

ÉTIENNE. I can go out, I can come in, you no longer cross-question me, you do not spy on my movements.

GERMAINE. You are absolutely free.

ÉTIENNE. Is it because of ill-will or good sense?

GERMAINE. Guess for yourself.

ÉTIENNE. I can work now, the house is quiet.

GERMAINE. I am learning how to love you.

ÉTIENNE [*jealous and conceited*]. Is Pascal your instructor?

GERMAINE. He has given me some suggestions.

ÉTIENNE [*to* PASCAL]. Accept my congratulations.

GERMAINE. You are entirely welcome.

ÉTIENNE. I beg your pardon.

PASCAL [*intervening*]. Come now, my good fellow!

ÉTIENNE [*to* PASCAL]. I am not joking. You are doing me a real favor in looking after her.

GERMAINE. And he is grateful to you.

ÉTIENNE [*about to leave the room*]. I shall be back in a few moments. Play at adultery, since you find it diverting.

GERMAINE. Thanks for your permission.

PASCAL [*in a low tone to* GERMAINE]. Be careful. He is jealous.

GERMAINE. You do not know him. Whatever we may do, his self-conceit will surpass our imprudence.

ÉTIENNE [*at the door, aside, with a suspicious air*]. Could it be possible that? . . . [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Bah! I shall see about that later. [ÉTIENNE *goes out.*]

PASCAL. Are you going to be very nice to me?

GERMAINE. That depends.

PASCAL. Put aside that book which does not interest you, put on your hat again and come with me to the Club.

GERMAINE [*abruptly*]. I have already told you no.

PASCAL. You are making a mistake. There is a superb Bonnat.

GERMAINE. A lot I care about Bonnat.

PASCAL. We always see the expositions together. Why should n't you see this one with me?

GERMAINE. I am in no humor to look at pictures, I assure you.

PASCAL. Neither am I. Only I should have been glad to walk beside you in the street, we might have taken a little walk You have avoided me for a week. I would have told my old friend all the troubles caused me by . . .

GERMAINE [*interrupting*]. By your new mistress?

PASCAL. By my mistress!

GERMAINE. Well, I should have preferred to remain my husband's, but he would not keep me.

PASCAL. The idiot!

GERMAINE. Go along and do not wait for me. I should be a gloomy companion to-day. Besides, I prefer not to hear your secrets.

PASCAL. Oh! I had no ulterior motive, I swear to you. I know your feelings too well to mention a certain subject. Don't worry, I shall not try to make you relent. We should have talked in a friendly way, without reserve as we used to, as we did before.

GERMAINE. Let us talk here, then.

PASCAL. Here? I could n't.

GERMAINE. Why not?

PASCAL. Now I am ashamed and embarrassed. Everything seems to me complicated, difficult and odious. The simplest things seem extraordinary now. The furniture and every object suddenly looks different, as though the lights had been shifted.

GERMAINE. Alas!

PASCAL. I no longer feel at home in this house. I no longer dare to take a meal here. I have n't even the courage to give an order to a servant.

GERMAINE. Your old habits have been interfered with.

PASCAL. I don't venture to call except in an afternoon or dinner coat.

GERMAINE. The even tenor of your life is disturbed.

PASCAL. A while ago, I was freezing and I did n't dare to put a log on the fire. There are some cigars of which I am very fond and I have wanted to smoke one for the last quarter of an hour. Well, I should not think of touching them. Those are your husband's cigars now. I could have taken anything from that good friend before I took his wife.

GERMAINE. Let well enough alone.

PASCAL. You are mistaken if you think I feel no remorse. I have as guilty a conscience as you, perhaps more than you. I laugh and bluff it out, but at heart I am in torture. I imagine that everything I say is criminal. Ah! I was not meant to live in this kind of a world.

GERMAINE. If only we had n't been contemporaries!

PASCAL. Don't joke about it. You are as unhappy as before and our real friendship is destroyed.

GERMAINE. Bah!

PASCAL. We three used to be so gay, such good chums, so loyal to each other. Good-by to our nice evenings together! There were quarrels sometimes but all the same we got along. What friends I have lost!

GERMAINE. I have never seen such a tender-hearted egoist.

PASCAL. Ah! Why did your madness disarm me the other day? Why . . .

GERMAINE. Don't blame me for having led you astray.

PASCAL. I was so conceited, I thought I could comfort you.

GERMAINE. As if that were possible!

PASCAL. I have made a nice mess of it. This happiness, of which I have not dreamed for nine years and which was the result of a terrible sorrow, is certain to crumble into dust to-morrow, and I shall remain as madly in love with you as ever. A fine success!

GERMAINE. Then be kind now.

PASCAL. I'll wager that before three days have passed, your door will be closed to me.

GERMAINE. That might easily happen.

PASCAL. Oh! That will happen. Your coolness offers me nothing to hope for. Before long I shall be wounded by a sword which will not kill me, unfortunately, and all will be over between the three of us. Each will go his own way. Only the house will remain.

GERMAINE. And the furniture, of course.

PASCAL. What is going to become of me if I cannot see you every day? It may kill me, do you know that?

GERMAINE. Well, then, you will die, my dear.

PASCAL. Is that all you say?

GERMAINE. Or you will marry Madame Brissot.

PASCAL. She has n't put on weight.

GERMAINE. Make up with Mauricette.

PASCAL. But when she was my mistress, I spent my days here! See here, you did wrong in choosing a man who loved you in order to have revenge on your husband. Since you were to give yourself once and once only, your purpose would have been served by a man who cared nothing about you.

GERMAINE. You happened to be there.

[*Pause.*]

PASCAL [*almost gaily*]. So then, never again?

GERMAINE. Never.

PASCAL. That's not fair.

GERMAINE. Remember you promised to cheer me up.

PASCAL. Yes, of course, I want to cheer you up. Yet if you listened to me . . .

GERMAINE. Please!

PASCAL. Don't take time to consider. Do as you did the other day; first have a quarrel.

GERMAINE. Let us be serious.

PASCAL. It will not add to your guilt.

GERMAINE. Quite the reverse.

PASCAL. You are entirely right. In yielding yourself to a poor devil who was passing, you assumed certain obligations towards him. Why should you not keep them? One does not shower favors on a poor wretch and then drive him out of the house the next moment.

GERMAINE. What is once begun must be continued.

PASCAL. Sympathy commands it and public opinion advises it.

GERMAINE. Public opinion!

PASCAL. The repetition of certain faults lessens their gravity.

GERMAINE. There are even crimes that become respectable through long practice.

PASCAL. A woman of position is forgiven for a liaison, she is not forgiven for . . .

GERMAINE [*finishing the sentence*]. A whim.

PASCAL. And people are right in that respect.

GERMAINE. One is not allowed to be unfaithful, through force of circumstances.

PASCAL. No, and on that point I share the opinion of some Carlist officer or other who had deserted his colors. He was reproached in my presence for persisting in his disloyalty. "My dear fellow," he replied indignantly, "when a Spaniard is a traitor, he is a life-long traitor."

GERMAINE. A Spanish woman would have given a different answer.

[*Enter* ÉTIENNE.]

ÉTIENNE [*jealous and self-satisfied*]. Don't allow me to interrupt you. Don't stop talking.

GERMAINE. Perhaps you might not like it if I continued.

PASCAL. She exaggerates.

ÉTIENNE [*to* PASCAL]. You may tell her again that you love her, you know. I shan't object.

GERMAINE. He is more clever at it than I thought.

ÉTIENNE. Good Pascal, he is so straightforward.

PASCAL. Unfortunately, straightforward people have little luck.

GERMAINE. Sometimes they are lucky.

ÉTIENNE. Sometimes?

GERMAINE. That depends.

PASCAL [*aside*]. The devil!

ÉTIENNE [*to* PASCAL]. With women, one only needs to arrive at the proper moment. Don't you think so?

GERMAINE. Perhaps that is truer than you suppose.

ÉTIENNE [*with anger and self-conceit*]. No, but while you are about it, call me . . .

GERMAINE. What? Not Molière's word, I hope?

ÉTIENNE. Yes, I should like to hear myself called that. It would transform me.

GERMAINE [*losing her self-control*]. Well, you are . . . !

ÉTIENNE. Come, pluck up your courage.

GERMAINE. Do not insist. It is better for me to say nothing.

ÉTIENNE. Go ahead. You are burning to tell me the truth, and I am curious to hear it.

PASCAL. Let us not carry the joke any further.

ÉTIENNE [*to* PASCAL]. She is afraid of giving me some pleasure. [*To* GERMAINE.] Speak.

GERMAINE. I am willing to, but not while he is here.

ÉTIENNE [*to* PASCAL]. Well, then, leave us.

PASCAL [*to* GERMAINE]. Are you sending me away?

GERMAINE. Good-by.

ÉTIENNE. It is a furlough, I suppose?

PASCAL. I am certainly out of luck. I'll see you later. [PASCAL *goes out. Pause.*]

ÉTIENNE. You can speak now.

GERMAINE. If you wish it. [*Pause.*]

ÉTIENNE [*furiously*]. Enough of your reticence and irony. I wish to know the reason for your scoffing and that man's embarrassment.

GERMAINE. Very well.

ÉTIENNE. For an hour you have both

defied me. It is time for this jesting to end I desire to be informed. We are alone. The door is closed. Let us have an explanation, an immediate explanation.

GERMAINE [*hesitating*]. Well . . .

ÉTIENNE. Is that all you have to say? [*Pause.*] You are not afraid, I suppose?

GERMAINE. No.

ÉTIENNE [*cruelly*]. If you hesitate for fear of causing me sorrow, you are strangely mistaken, for your affection is the only thing I fear.

GERMAINE [*indignant*]. Étienne!

ÉTIENNE A lot I care about your fidelity!

GERMAINE. Étienne!

ÉTIENNE. I do not love you, you know that; I have never loved you, not even an hour, and you must have been indulgent these last eight years in not understanding what a nuisance you have been to me.

GERMAINE [*indignant*]. Ah! You still insult me!

ÉTIENNE. Yes or no, is it true?

GERMAINE. Well, yes, it is true.

ÉTIENNE. With him?

GERMAINE. The other day.

ÉTIENNE [*with a threatening gesture*]. You vile woman!

GERMAINE. You offered me; well, I gave myself. You need not bother to offer me again, my dear, the deed is done.

ÉTIENNE. Silence! You are lying. I refuse to believe you.

GERMAINE. You are mistaken. I have deceived you, do you understand? I have deceived you. Yes, I have committed that infamous act, and I am glad of it, and I am glad to tell you of it, and under the same circumstances I should do it again.

ÉTIENNE. Be quiet! Silence!

GERMAINE. No, I insist on speaking. It was your own wish. You shall know all the secrets of my heart.

ÉTIENNE. Be silent or I'll kill you.

GERMAINE. Why should you raise your hand to strike me? Did you not wish it? Since you were so eager to be relieved of me, now be satisfied. You have your freedom.

ÉTIENNE. You have been unfaithful to me?

GERMAINE. Yes, you whom I have adored, you whom all women have loved, you have been deceived like any other man. You thought you could make me suffer until the end of time and that I should never turn the tables on you. What a mistake! Accounts are settled, you see. If my love has been wounded, so has your vanity. Thank God, now you are ridiculous!

ÉTIENNE. Ridiculous?

GERMAINE. Now we are square.

ÉTIENNE. Will you be quiet?

GERMAINE. Ah! The other evening, after insulting me, you came home without a care in the world. You went to sleep on this couch without worrying whether I was dead or alive. You did not dare to cross the threshold of my room for fear of a reconciliation, did you? Well, allow me to tell you, my dear, that your good judgment was at fault, because that evening, strangely enough, you would not have been obliged to endure the caresses of your wife, and I should have confessed to you what I have just told you. I should not have been condemned to this hypocrisy which has stifled me for a week and which you took for tact and resignation. All men are the same!

ÉTIENNE. Have you finished?

GERMAINE. Yes, I have finished. Now you can kill me. I have said all that I have to say. I am waiting. Whatever you may do, you can not be more cruel than you have been. [*She sits down.*]

ÉTIENNE [*harshly*]. No, I shall not kill you, I shall not do you that favor; you would be too well satisfied. I shall leave this house, nothing more.

[*He picks up his hat.*]

GERMAINE. Ah!

ÉTIENNE. I shall never see you nor hear you speak again, that will be my only punishment. I had a wife and a good friend, I have lost both; but I shall forget, I shall work and realize the ambitions which you have hindered for eight years by your complaints, your abuse and all your quibbling. I have wasted enough time with you. Good-by; my period of servitude is ended, now I am free. You were right, I

have been relieved of you. Thanks to your infamy, I have secured release.

GERMAINE. Good-by.

ÉTIENNE. Whatever happens, however low you sink, my freedom will not be bought too dearly. Understand that I value this freedom more than my happiness, more than my dignity.

GERMAINE. You may go. By going away, your vengeance is more generous than you suppose.

ÉTIENNE [*drawing near to her*]. It is not an outraged husband who is leaving, it is a lover who abandons a tiresome mistress. You cannot know how often I have cursed the feeling of pity which kept me here a prisoner. Thank God, now I have the right to leave you without remorse. I shall never find so good an opportunity. Neither duty nor pity obliges me to live with a wanton.

GERMAINE. That is for you to choose.

ÉTIENNE [*with rage*]. For only a wanton gives herself to a passer-by because she will not take a dare. A woman who deceives you because she was given permission, would do so without permission. She could have had no scruples before.

GERMAINE. Mere casuistry.

ÉTIENNE. Only a wanton takes advantage of a fit of temper. No one has such a right. An honest person does not listen to a lunatic who advises him to steal. You have no reason to plume yourself on a virtuous act. Your act is outrageous.

GERMAINE. I was driven to it by despair.

ÉTIENNE. By a cynical desire to get even.

GERMAINE. By indignation.

ÉTIENNE. The gravity of my mistakes does not excuse your infidelity. The punishment exceeds the offense.

GERMAINE. I am glad of it.

ÉTIENNE. And you dare to accuse me? However unkind and imperfect I may have been, I have not been false to you. I have given to no other woman what I was unable to give to you, either through egoism or cruelty or indifference. With all your love, you have committed a sin which a woman without love in her heart would never have committed. What more could you have done if you had not loved me?

GERMAINE. Had I not loved you, I should not have suffered. I should have accepted your treatment without protest.

ÉTIENNE. That would have been the wiser course. But why prolong such a scene? We have never been really married; it is useless for me to talk to you as a husband. Good-by. I shall not return to this house until you have left it.

GERMAINE. I shall lose no time in leaving.

ÉTIENNE. I expect that.

GERMAINE. You will not have long to wait.

ÉTIENNE. I release you from every tie. Do anything you like.

GERMAINE. Thanks.

ÉTIENNE [*standing at the door*]. And in leaving you, I still have the power to torment you, for I do not love you, I repeat it, and you do love me.

GERMAINE [*violently*]. You are mistaken; I am cured, I no longer love you. Your insults have worn out my adoration, and love for another man has done the rest.

ÉTIENNE. Hurry and join him then, for I shall kill him to-morrow. [*He goes out.*]

GERMAINE [*tenderly*]. Étienne! [*Alone and bursting into tears.*] I have lost him now, it's all over. [*Long pause.*]

[*Enter* PASCAL.]

PASCAL. You are crying? [GERMAINE *raises her head.*] You have just told him everything, have n't you? That man has insulted you again.

GERMAINE [*with despair and scorn*]. I forbid you to accuse him.

PASCAL. You have already forgotten his offenses.

GERMAINE. His offenses? And how did he ever offend you? Unkind to me, yes, but what harm did he ever do you? Why did you take away his wife from him? By what right did you steal from him what was his, you who were his friend, his old chum, his inseparable companion, his father-confessor? Perhaps he often used to tell you that he loved me. I am sure he told you so and you have concealed it from me.

PASCAL. No, he did not.

GERMAINE [*sobbing*]. You should have let me think so. But you were too jealous of my love for him. You took good care not to let me think so, did n't you? You waited patiently for the moment to rob him and gratify your resentment of a homely man and rejected suitor.

PASCAL. I loved you.

GERMAINE. That's a lie.

PASCAL. I swear it is the truth.

GERMAINE [*sobbing*]. At all events, I did not love you, and you knew it. Does a gentleman take advantage of a woman's grief, especially when he loves her? Instead of making me your mistress, you should have advised me, protected me, and brought back my husband to me . . . When I think! [*With horror.*] Go away; I despise you, I hate you, I never want to see you again. Take your laments, your cynicism and your ill-starred friendship elsewhere. You are the cause of all my grief. Had it not been for you, I should still be happy. Were it not for you, he would still be here. Go, you are a coward. You alone have no excuse for your actions, and if my husband kills you to-morrow, you will richly deserve it.

PASCAL [*about to go out*]. I shall not defend myself.

GERMAINE. That is my advice.

PASCAL [*aside, at the door*]. Well! That was a fine idea of mine to come back.

[PASCAL *goes out.*]

GERMAINE [*alone, despairingly*]. I, too, have no reason to be here. I must leave at once, and I know well enough how . . .

[*She puts on her cloak and rushes toward the door.*]

ÉTIENNE [*intercepting her*]. Where are you going?

GERMAINE. What difference can that make to you?

ÉTIENNE. I wish to know. [*She puts on her gloves.*] You are going to kill yourself, I am certain.

GERMAINE [*dissembling*]. You are mistaken. A woman who is going to kill herself does not put on her gloves so coolly.

ÉTIENNE. Where are you going, then? [*She continues to draw on her gloves.*] Answer me. [*She takes a few steps to go out. He bars the way.*] A little later you may go, after you have answered me. You are not going to join that man, I hope?

GERMAINE. Really, your jealousy comes a bit late.

ÉTIENNE. You still bear my name.

GERMAINE. You have driven me out. I am leaving.

ÉTIENNE. Wait until that man has given me satisfaction.

GERMAINE. I shall not spend another five minutes under the same roof as you.

ÉTIENNE [*losing control of himself*]. Even if I have to lock you up, if I have to crush you, you shall not go and rejoin that wretch. That I forbid you. [*She takes a step forward, he seizes her violently by the arm; she cries out with pain.—Ashamed and relenting.*] Ah! I hurt you. Forgive me.

GERMAINE [*with hope*]. Étienne!

[*Pause.*]

ÉTIENNE [*bitterly*]. Ah! Why did my anxiety and jealousy make me open that door again? Why did I hinder you from leaving? By what horrible contradiction of my heart did I come back? Can I go away now? Alas! We have insulted one another as if we were enemies. Irreparable words have passed between us. I have misunderstood you, you have betrayed me, and here I am. It would seem that we are bound to each other by all the suffering we have caused one another, by all the infamous things we have said. What degradation! [*He weeps.*]

GERMAINE [*also weeping*]. My God! My God! [*Pause.*]

ÉTIENNE [*with shame*]. You lied to me, did n't you? You were not going to meet him?

GERMAINE. No.

ÉTIENNE. And you still love me, you have never ceased to love me? Ah! I beg you to answer. You see what a coward I am.

GERMAINE. Why should I answer you? Have I not placed a barrier between us forever? We cannot live together now.

ÉTIENNE [*bowing his head*]. Perhaps we can.

GERMAINE. Perhaps! Is there no such thing as justice?

ÉTIENNE [*tenderly*]. Yes, fortunately.

GERMAINE [*rushing toward the door*]. You are mad. It is better for me to go.

ÉTIENNE [*barring her way*]. I do not wish you to.

GERMAINE. Consider, Étienne, you will be unhappy.

ÉTIENNE [*without daring to look at her or to draw near to her*]. What difference does that make!

END OF THE PLAY

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

By EDMOND ROSTAND

Translated from the French by GERTRUDE HALL

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Cyrano de Bergerac
Christian de Neuvillette
Comte de Guiche
Ragueneau
Le Bret
Captain Carbon de Castel-Jaloux
Lignière
De Valvert
Montfleury
Bellerose
Jodelet
Cuigy
Brissaille
A Bore
A Mousquetaire
Other Mousquetaire
A Spanish Officer
A Light-Cavalry Man
A Doorkeeper
A Burgher
His Son
A Pickpocket
A Spectator
A Watchman
Bertrandou the Fifer
A Capuchin
Two Musicians
Seven Cadets
Three Marquises
Poets
Pastrycooks

Roxane
Sister Martha

Lise
The Sweetmeat Vender
Mother Margaret
The Duenna
Sister Claire
An Actress
A Soubrette
A Flower-Girl
Pages

The crowd, bourgeois, marquises, mousquetaires, pickpockets, pastrycooks, poets, Gascony Cadets, players, fiddlers, pages, children, Spanish soldiers, spectators, précieuses, actresses, bourgeoises, nuns, etc.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

ACT FIRST

A PLAY AT THE HOTEL DE BOURGOGNE

The great hall of the Hotel de Bourgogne, in 1640. A sort of tennis-court arranged and decorated for theatrical performances.

The hall is a long rectangle, seen obliquely, so that one side of it constitutes the background, which runs from the position of the front wing at the right, to the line of the furthest wing at the left, and forms an angle with the stage, which is equally seen obliquely.

This stage is furnished, on both sides, along the wings, with benches. The drop-curtain is composed of two tapestry hangings, which can be drawn apart. Above a harlequin cloak, the royal escutcheon. Broad steps lead from the raised platform of the stage into the house. On either side of these steps, the musicians' seats. A row of candles fills the office of footlights.

Two galleries run along the side; the lower one is divided into boxes. No seats in the pit, which is the stage proper. At the back of the pit, that is to say, at the right, in the front, a few seats raised like steps, one above the other; and, under a stairway which leads to the upper seats, and of which the lower end only is visible, a stand decked with small candelabra, jars full of flowers, flagons and glasses, dishes heaped with sweetmeats, etc.

In the centre of the background, under the box-tier, the entrance to the theatre, large door which half opens to let in the spectators. On the panels of this door, and in several corners, and above the sweetmeat stand, red playbills announcing La Clorise.

At the rise of the curtain, the house is nearly dark, and still empty. The chandeliers are let down in the middle of the pit, until time to light them.

The audience, arriving gradually. Cavaliers, burghers, lackeys, pages, fiddlers, etc.

A tumult of voices is heard beyond the door; enter brusquely a Cavalier.

Doorkeeper [*running in after him*]. Not so fast! Your fifteen pence!

Cavalier. I come in admission free!

Doorkeeper. And why?

Cavalier. I belong to the king's light cavalry!

Doorkeeper [*to another* Cavalier *who has entered*]. You?

Second Cavalier. I do not pay!

Doorkeeper. But . . .

Second Cavalier. I belong to the mousquetaires!

First Cavalier [*to the* Second]. It does not begin before two. The floor is empty. Let us have a bout with foils.

[*They fence with foils they have brought.*]

A Lackey [*entering*]. Pst! . . . Flanquin!

Other Lackey [*arrived a moment before*]. Champagne? . . .

First Lackey [*taking a pack of cards from his doublet and showing it to* Second Lackey]. Cards. Dice. [*Sits down on the floor.*] Let us have a game.

Second Lackey [*sitting down likewise*]. You rascal, willingly!

First Lackey [*taking from his pocket a bit of candle which he lights and sticks on the floor*]. I prigged an eyeful of my master's light!

One of the Watch [*to a* flower-girl, *who comes forward*]. It is pleasant getting here before the lights.

[*Puts his arm around her waist.*]

One of the Fencers [*taking a thrust*]. Hit!

One of the Gamblers. Clubs!

The Watchman [*pursuing the girl*]. A kiss!

The Flower-Girl [*repulsing him*]. We shall be seen!

The Watchman [*drawing her into a dark corner*]. No, we shall not!

A MAN [*sitting down on the floor with others who have brought provisions*]. By coming early, you get a comfortable chance to eat.

A BURGHER [*leading his son*]. This should be a good place, my boy. Let us stay here.

ONE OF THE GAMBLERS. Ace wins!

A MAN [*taking a bottle from under his cloak and sitting down*]. A proper toper, toping Burgundy [*drinks*], I say should tope it in Burgundy House!

THE BURGHER [*to his son*]. Might one not suppose we had stumbled into some house of evil fame? [*Points with his cane at the drunkard.*] Guzzlers! . . . [*In breaking guard one of the fencers jostles him.*] Brawlers! . . . [*He falls between the gamblers.*] Gamesters! . . .

THE WATCHMAN [*behind him, still teasing the flower-girl*]. A kiss!

THE BURGHER [*dragging his son precipitately away*]. Bless my soul! . . . And to reflect that in this very house, my son, were given the plays of the great Rotrou!

THE YOUTH. And those of the great Corneille!

[*A band of* PAGES *holding hands rush in performing a farandole and singing.*]

PAGES. Tra la la la la la la la! . . .

DOORKEEPER [*severely to the* PAGES]. Look, now! . . . you pages, you! none of your tricks!

FIRST PAGE [*with wounded dignity*]. Sir! . . . this want of confidence . . . [*As soon as the doorkeeper has turned away, briskly to the* SECOND PAGE.] Have you a string about you?

SECOND PAGE. With a fish-hook at the end!

FIRST PAGE. We will sit up there and angle for wigs!

A PICKPOCKET [*surrounded by a number of individuals of dubious appearance*]. Come, now, my little hopefuls, and learn your A B C's of trade. Being as you're not used to hooking . . .

SECOND PAGE [*shouting to other* PAGES *who have already taken seats in the upper gallery*]. Ho! . . . Did you bring any pea-shooters?

THIRD PAGE [*from above*]. Yes! . . . And pease! . . . [*Shoots down a volley of pease.*]

THE YOUTH [*to his father*]. What are we going to see?

THE BURGHER. Clorise.

THE YOUTH. By whom?

THE BURGHER. By Balthazar Baro. Ah, what a play it is! . . .

[*Goes toward the back on his son's arm.*]

PICKPOCKET [*to his disciples*]. Particularly the lace-ruffles at the knees, . . . you're to snip off carefully!

A SPECTATOR [*to another, pointing toward an upper seat*]. Look! On the first night of the Cid, I was perched up there!

PICKPOCKET [*with pantomimic suggestion of spiriting away*] Watches . . .

THE BURGHER [*coming forward again with his son*]. The actors you are about to see, my son, are among the most illustrious . . .

PICKPOCKET [*with show of subtracting with furtive little tugs*]. Pocket-handkerchiefs . . .

THE BURGHER. Montfleury . . .

SOMEBODY [*shouting from the upper gallery*]. Make haste, and light the chandeliers!

THE BURGHER. Bellerose, l'Épy, the Beaupré, Jodelet . . .

A PAGE [*in the pit*]. Ah! . . . Here comes the goody-seller!

THE SWEETMEAT VENDER [*appearing behind the stand*]. Oranges . . . Milk . . . Raspberry cordial . . . citron-wine . . .

[*Hubbub at the door.*]

FALSETTO VOICE [*outside*]. Make room, ruffians!

ONE OF THE LACKEYS [*astonished*]. The marquises . . . in the pit!

OTHER LACKEY. Oh, for an instant only!

[*Enter a band of foppish* YOUNG MARQUISES.]

ONE OF THE MARQUISES [*looking around the half-empty house*]. What? . . . We happen in like so many linen-drapers? Without disturbing anybody? treading on any feet? . . . Too bad! too bad! too bad! [*He finds himself near several other gentlemen, come in a moment before.*] Cuigy, Brissaille! [*Effusive embraces.*]

CUIGY. We are of the faithful indeed. We are here before the lights.

THE MARQUIS. Ah, do not speak of it! . . . It has put me in such a humor!

OTHER MARQUIS. Be comforted, marquis . . . here comes the candle-lighter!

THE AUDIENCE [*greeting the arrival of the candle-lighter*]. Ah! . . .

[*Many gather around the chandeliers while they are being lighted. A few have taken seats in the galleries.*]

[LIGNIÈRE *enters, arm in arm with* CHRISTIAN DE NEUVILLETTE. LIGNIÈRE, *in somewhat disordered apparel, appearance of gentlemanly drunkard.* CHRISTIAN, *becomingly dressed, but in clothes of a slightly obsolete elegance.*]

CUIGY. Lignière!

BRISSAILLE [*laughing*]. Not tipsy yet?

LIGNIÈRE [*low to* CHRISTIAN]. Shall I present you? [CHRISTIAN *nods assent.*] Baron de Neuvillette . . .

[*Exchange of bows.*]

THE AUDIENCE [*cheering the ascent of the first lighted chandelier*]. Ah! . . .

CUIGY [*to* BRISSAILLE, *looking at* CHRISTIAN]. A charming head . . . charming!

FIRST MARQUIS [*who has overheard*]. Pooh! . . .

LIGNIÈRE [*presenting* CHRISTIAN]. Messieurs de Cuigy . . . de Brissaille . . .

CHRISTIAN [*bowing*]. Delighted! . . .

FIRST MARQUIS [*to* SECOND]. He is a pretty fellow enough, but is dressed in the fashion of some other year!

LIGNIÈRE [*to* CUIGY]. Monsieur is lately arrived from Touraine.

CHRISTIAN. Yes, I have been in Paris not over twenty days. I enter the Guards to-morrow, the Cadets.

FIRST MARQUIS [*looking at those who appear in the boxes*]. There comes the président Aubry!

SWEETMEAT VENDER. Oranges! Milk!

THE FIDDLERS [*tuning*]. La . . . la . . .

CUIGY [*to* CHRISTIAN, *indicating the house which is filling*]. A good house! . . .

CHRISTIAN. Yes, crowded.

FIRST MARQUIS. The whole of fashion!

[*They give the names of the women, as, very brilliantly attired, these enter the boxes. Exchange of bows and smiles.*]

SECOND MARQUIS. Mesdames de Guéménée . . .

CUIGY. De Bois-Dauphin . . .

FIRST MARQUIS. Whom . . . time was! . . . we loved! . . .

BRISSAILLE. . . . de Chavigny . . .

SECOND MARQUIS. Who still plays havoc with our hearts!

LIGNIÈRE. *Tiens!* Monsieur de Corneille has come back from Rouen!

THE YOUTH [*to his father*]. The Academy is present?

THE BURGHER. Yes . . . I perceive more than one member of it. Yonder are Boudu, Boissat and Cureau . . . Porchères, Colomby, Bourzeys, Bourdon, Arbaut . . . All names of which not one will be forgotten. What a beautiful thought it is!

FIRST MARQUIS. Attention! Our précieuses are coming into their seats . . . Barthénoide, Urimédonte, Cassandace, Félixérie . . .

SECOND MARQUIS. Ah, how exquisite are their surnames! . . . Marquis, can you tell them off, all of them?

FIRST MARQUIS. I can tell them off, all of them, marquis!

LIGNIÈRE [*drawing* CHRISTIAN *aside*]. Dear fellow, I came in here to be of use to you. The lady does not come. I revert to my vice!

CHRISTIAN [*imploring*]. No! No! . . . You who turn into ditties Town and Court, stay by me; you will be able to tell me for whom it is I am dying of love!

THE LEADER OF THE VIOLINS [*rapping on his desk with his bow*]. Gentlemen! . . .

[*He raises his bow.*]

SWEETMEAT VENDER. Macaroons . . . Citronade . . . [*The fiddles begin playing.*]

CHRISTIAN. I fear . . . oh, I fear to find that she is fanciful and intricate! I dare not speak to her, for I am of a simple wit. The language written and spoken in these days bewilders and baffles me. I am a plain soldier . . . shy, to boot. — She is always at the right, there, the end: the empty box.

LIGNIÈRE [*with show of leaving*]. I am going.

CHRISTIAN [*still attempting to detain him*]. Oh, no! . . . Stay, I beseech you!

LIGNIÈRE. I cannot. D'Assoucy is expecting me at the pot-house. Here is a mortal drought!

SWEETMEAT VENDER [*passing before him with a tray*]. Orangeade? . . .

LIGNIÈRE. Ugh!

SWEETMEAT VENDER. Milk? . . .

LIGNIÈRE. Pah! . . .

SWEETMEAT VENDER. Lacrima? . . .

LIGNIÈRE. Stop! [*To* CHRISTIAN.] I will tarry a bit. . . . Let us see this lacrima?

[*Sits down at the sweetmeat stand. The* VENDER *pours him a glass of lacrima.*]

[*Shouts among the audience at the entrance of a little, merry-faced, roly-poly man.*]

AUDIENCE. Ah, Ragueneau! . . .

LIGNIÈRE [*to* CHRISTIAN]. Ragueneau, who keeps the great cook-shop.

RAGUENEAU [*attired like a pastrycook in his Sunday best, coming quickly toward* LIGNIÈRE]. Monsieur, have you seen Monsieur de Cyrano?

LIGNIÈRE [*presenting* RAGUENEAU *to* CHRISTIAN]. The pastrycook of poets and of players!

RAGUENEAU [*abashed*]. Too much honor. . . .

LIGNIÈRE. No modesty! . . . Mecænas! . . .

RAGUENEAU. It is true, those gentlemen are among my customers. . . .

LIGNIÈRE. Debitors! . . . A considerable poet himself. . . .

RAGUENEAU. It has been said! . . .

LIGNIÈRE. Daft on poetry! . . .

RAGUENEAU. It is true that for an ode . . .

LIGNIÈRE. You are willing to give at any time a tart!

RAGUENEAU. . . . let. A tart-let.

LIGNIÈRE. Kind soul, he tries to cheapen his charitable acts! And for a triolet were you not known to give . . . ?

RAGUENEAU. Rolls. Just rolls.

LIGNIÈRE [*severely*]. Buttered! . . . And the play, you are fond of the play?

RAGUENEAU. It is with me a passion!

LIGNIÈRE. And you settle for your entrance fee with a pastry currency. Come now, among ourselves, what did you have to give to-day for admittance here?

RAGUENEAU. Four custards . . . eighteen lady-fingers. [*He looks all around.*] Monsieur de Cyrano is not here. I wonder at it.

LIGNIÈRE. And why?

RAGUENEAU. Montfleury is billed to play.

LIGNIÈRE. So it is, indeed. That ton of man will to-day entrance us in the part of Phœdo . . . Phœdo! . . . But what is that to Cyrano?

RAGUENEAU. Have you not heard? He interdicted Montfleury, whom he has taken in aversion, from appearing for one month upon the stage.

LIGNIÈRE [*who is at his fourth glass*]. Well?

RAGUENEAU. Montfleury is billed to play.

CUIGY [*who has drawn near with his companions*]. He cannot be prevented.

RAGUENEAU. He cannot? . . . Well, I am here to see!

FIRST MARQUIS. What is this Cyrano?

CUIGY. A crack-brain!

SECOND MARQUIS. Of quality?

CUIGY. Enough for daily uses. He is a cadet in the Guards. [*Pointing out a gentleman who is coming and going about the pit, as if in search of somebody.*] But his friend Le Bret can tell you. [*Calling.*] Le Bret! . . . [LE BRET *comes toward them.*] You are looking for Bergerac?

LE BRET. Yes. I am uneasy.

CUIGY. Is it not a fact that he is a most uncommon fellow?

LE BRET [*affectionately*]. The most exquisite being he is that walks beneath the moon!

RAGUENEAU. Poet!

CUIGY. Swordsman!

BRISSAILLE. Physicist!

LE BRET. Musician!

LIGNIÈRE. And what an extraordinary aspect he presents!

RAGUENEAU. I will not go so far as to say that I believe our grave Philippe de Champaigne will leave us a portrait of him; but, the bizarre, excessive, whimsical fellow that he is would certainly have

furnished the late Jacques Callot with a type of madcap fighter for one of his masques. Hat with triple feather, doublet with twice-triple skirt, cloak which his interminable rapier lifts up behind, with pomp, like the insolent tail of a cock; prouder than all the Artabans that Gascony ever bred, he goes about in his stiff Punchinello ruff, airing a nose. . . . Ah, gentlemen, what a nose is that! One cannot look upon such a specimen of the nasigera without exclaiming, "No! truly, the man exaggerates." . . . After that, one smiles, one says: "He will take it off." . . . But Monsieur de Bergerac never takes it off at all.

LE BRET [*shaking his head*]. He wears it always . . . and cuts down whoever breathes a syllable in comment.

RAGUENEAU [*proudly*]. His blade is half the shears of Fate!

FIRST MARQUIS [*shrugging his shoulders*]. He will not come!

RAGUENEAU. He will. I wager you a chicken à la Ragueneau.

FIRST MARQUIS [*laughing*]. Very well!

[*Murmur of admiration in the house.* ROXANE *has appeared in her box. She takes a seat in the front, her duenna at the back.* CHRISTIAN, *engaged in paying the* SWEETMEAT VENDER, *does not look.*]

SECOND MARQUIS [*uttering a series of small squeals*]. Ah, gentlemen, she is horrifically enticing!

FIRST MARQUIS. A strawberry set in a peach, and smiling!

SECOND MARQUIS. So fresh, that being near her, one might catch cold in his heart!

CHRISTIAN [*looks up, sees* ROXANE, *and, agitated, seizes* LIGNIÈRE *by the arm*]. That is she!

LIGNIÈRE [*looking*]. Ah, that is she! . . .

CHRISTIAN. Yes. Tell me at once. . . . Oh, I am afraid! . . .

LIGNIÈRE [*sipping his wine slowly*]. Magdeleine Robin, surnamed Roxane Subtle. Euphuistic.

CHRISTIAN. Alack-a-day!

LIGNIÈRE. Unmarried. An orphan. A cousin of Cyrano's . . . the one of whom they were talking.

[*While he is speaking, a richly dressed nobleman, wearing the order of the Holy Ghost on a blue ribbon across his breast, enters* ROXANE'S *box, and, without taking a seat, talks with her a moment.*]

CHRISTIAN [*starting*]. That man? . . .

LIGNIÈRE [*who is beginning to be tipsy, winking*]. Hé! Hé! Comte de Guiche. Enamored of her. But married to the niece of Armand de Richelieu. Wishes to manage a match between Roxane and certain sorry lord, one Monsieur de Valvert, vicomte and . . . easy. She does not subscribe to his views, but De Guiche is powerful: he can persecute to some purpose a simple commoner. But I have duly set forth his shady machinations in a song which . . . Ho! he must bear me a grudge! The end was wicked . . . Listen! . . .

[*He rises, staggering, and lifting his glass, is about to sing.*]

CHRISTIAN. No. Good-evening.

LIGNIÈRE. You are going? . . .

CHRISTIAN. To find Monsieur de Valvert.

LIGNIÈRE. Have a care. You are the one who will get killed. [*Indicating* ROXANE *by a glance.*] Stay. Some one is looking . . .

CHRISTIAN. It is true . . .

[*He remains absorbed in the contemplation of* ROXANE. *The pickpockets, seeing his abstracted air, draw nearer to him.*]

LIGNIÈRE. Ah, you are going to stay. Well, I am going. I am thirsty! And I am looked for . . . at all the public-houses!

[*Exit unsteadily.*]

LE BRET [*who has made the circuit of the house, returning toward* RAGUENEAU, *in a tone of relief*]. Cyrano is not here.

RAGUENEAU. And yet . . .

LE BRET. I will trust to Fortune he has not seen the announcement.

THE AUDIENCE. Begin! Begin!

ONE OF THE MARQUISES [*watching* DE GUICHE, *who comes from* ROXANE'S *box, and crosses the pit, surrounded by obsequious satellites, among whom the* VICOMTE DE VALVERT]. Always a court about him, De Guiche!

OTHER MARQUIS. Pf! . . . Another Gascon!

FIRST MARQUIS. A Gascon, of the cold and supple sort. That sort succeeds. Believe me, it will be best to offer him our duty. [*They approach* DE GUICHE.]

SECOND MARQUIS. These admirable ribbons! What color, Comte de Guiche? Should you call it Kiss-me-Sweet or . . . Expiring Fawn?

DE GUICHE. This shade is called Sick Spaniard.

FIRST MARQUIS. Appropriately called, for shortly, thanks to your valor, the Spaniard will be sick indeed, in Flanders!

DE GUICHE. I am going upon the stage. Are you coming? [*He walks toward the stage, followed by all the* MARQUISES *and men of quality. He turns and calls.*] Valvert, come!

CHRISTIAN [*who has been listening and watching them, starts on hearing that name*]. The vicomte! . . . Ah, in his face . . . in his face I will fling my . . . [*He puts his hand to his pocket and finds the pickpocket's hand. He turns.*] *Hein?*

PICKPOCKET. Aï!

CHRISTIAN [*without letting him go*]. I was looking for a glove.

PICKPOCKET [*with an abject smile*]. And you found a hand. [*In a different tone, low and rapid.*] Let me go . . . I will tell you a secret.

CHRISTIAN [*without releasing him*]. Well?

PICKPOCKET. Lignière who has just left you . . .

CHRISTIAN [*as above*]. Yes? . . .

PICKPOCKET. Has not an hour to live. A song he made annoyed one of the great, and a hundred men — I am one of them — will be posted to-night . . .

CHRISTIAN. A hundred? . . . By whom?

PICKPOCKET. Honor . . .

CHRISTIAN [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Oh! . . .

PICKPOCKET [*with great dignity*]. Among rogues!

CHRISTIAN. Where will they be posted?

PICKPOCKET. At the Porte de Nesle, on his way home. Inform him.

CHRISTIAN [*letting him go*]. But where can I find him?

PICKPOCKET. Go to all the taverns: the Golden Vat, the Pine-Apple, the Belt and Bosom, the Twin Torches, the Three Funnels, and in each one leave a scrap of writing warning him.

CHRISTIAN. Yes. I will run! . . . Ah, the blackguards! A hundred against one! . . . [*Looks lovingly toward* ROXANE.] Leave her! . . . [*Furiously, looking toward* VALVERT.] And him! . . . But Lignière must be prevented. [*Exit running.*]

[DE GUICHE, *the* MARQUISES, *all the gentry have disappeared behind the curtain, to place themselves on the stage-seats. The pit is crowded. There is not an empty seat in the boxes or the gallery.*]

THE AUDIENCE. Begin!

A BURGHER [*whose wig goes sailing off at the end of a string held by one of the* PAGES *in the upper gallery*]. My wig!

SCREAMS OF DELIGHT. He is bald! . . . The pages! . . . Well done! . . . Ha, ha, ha! . . .

THE BURGHER [*furious, shaking his fist*]. Imp of Satan! . . .

[*Laughter and screams, beginning very loud and decreasing suddenly. Dead silence.*]

LE BRET [*astonished*]. This sudden hush? . . . [*One of the spectators whispers in his ear.*] Ah? . . .

THE SPECTATOR. I have it from a reliable quarter.

RUNNING MURMURS. Hush! . . . Has he come? No! . . . Yes, he has! . . . In the box with the grating. . . . The cardinal! . . . the cardinal! . . . the cardinal! . . .

ONE OF THE PAGES. What a shame! . . . Now we shall have to behave!

[*Knocking on the stage. Complete stillness. Pause.*]

VOICE OF ONE OF THE MARQUISES [*breaking the deep silence, behind the curtain*]. Snuff that candle!

OTHER MARQUIS [*thrusting his head out between the curtains*]. A chair!

[*A chair is passed from hand to hand, above the heads. The* MARQUIS *takes it and disappears, after kissing his hand repeatedly toward the boxes.*]

A Spectator. Silence!

[*Once more, the three knocks. The curtain opens. Tableau. The* Marquises *seated at the sides, in attitudes of languid haughtiness. The stage-setting is the faint-colored bluish sort usual in a pastoral. Four small crystal candelabra light the stage. The violins play softly.*]

Le Bret [*to* Ragueneau, *under breath*]. Is Montfleury the first to appear?

Ragueneau [*likewise under breath*]. Yes. The opening lines are his.

Le Bret. Cyrano is not here.

Ragueneau. I have lost my wager.

Le Bret. Let us be thankful. Let us be thankful.

[*A bagpipe is heard.* Montfleury *appears upon the stage, enormous, in a conventional shepherd's costume, with a rose-wreathed hat set jauntily on the side of his head, breathing into a be-ribboned bagpipe.*]

The Pit [*applauding*]. Bravo, Montfleury! Montfleury!

Montfleury [*after bowing, proceeds to play the part of* Phœdo].

Happy the man who, freed from Fashion's fickle sway,
In exile self-prescribed whiles peaceful hours away;
Who when Zephyrus sighs amid the answering trees . . .

A Voice [*from the middle of the pit*]. Rogue! Did I not forbid you for one month?

[*Consternation. Every one looks around. Murmurs.*]

Various Voices. *Hein?* What? What is the matter?

[*Many in the boxes rise to see.*]

Cuigy. It is he!

Le Bret [*alarmed*]. Cyrano!

The Voice. King of the Obese! Incontinently vanish! . . .

The Whole Audience [*indignant*]. Oh! . . .

Montfleury. But . . .

The Voice. You stop to muse upon the matter?

Several Voices [*from the pit and the boxes*]. Hush! . . . Enough! . . . Proceed, Montfleury. . . . Fear nothing!

Montfleury [*in an unsteady voice*]. Happy the man who, freed from Fashion's f— . . .

The Voice [*more threatening than before*]. How is this? Shall I be constrained, Man of the Monster Belly, to enforce my regulation . . . regularly?

[*An arm holding a cane leaps above the level of the heads.*]

Montfleury [*in a voice growing fainter and fainter*].

Happy the man . . .

[*The cane is wildly flourished.*]

The Voice. Leave the stage!

The Pit. Oh! . . .

Montfleury [*choking*].

Happy the man who freed . . .

Cyrano [*appears above the audience, standing upon a chair, his arms folded on his chest, his hat at a combative angle, his moustache on end, his nose terrifying*]. Ah! I shall lose my temper!

[*Sensation at sight of him.*]

Montfleury [*to the* Marquises]. Messieurs, I appeal to you!

One of the Marquises [*languidly*]. But go ahead! . . . Play!

Cyrano. Fat man, if you attempt it, I will dust the paint off you with this!

The Marquis. Enough!

Cyrano. Let every little lordling keep silence in his seat, or I will ruffle his ribbons with my cane!

All the Marquises [*rising*]. This is too much! . . . Montfleury. . . .

Cyrano. Let Montfleury go home, or stay, and, having cut his ears off, I will disembowel him!

A Voice. But . . .

Cyrano. Let him go home, I said!

Other Voice. But after all . . .

Cyrano. It is not yet done? [*With show of turning up his sleeves.*] Very well, upon that stage, as on a platter trimmed with green, you shall see me carve that mount of brawn . . .

Montfleury [*calling up his whole dignity*]. Monsieur, you cast indignity, in my person, upon the Muse!

CYRANO [*very civilly*]. Monsieur, if that lady, with whom you have naught to do, had the pleasure of beholding you . . . just as you stand, there, like a decorated pot! . . . she could not live, I do protest, but she hurled her buskin at you!

THE PIT. Montfleury! . . . Montfleury! . . . Give us Baro's piece!

CYRANO [*to those shouting around him*]. I beg you will show some regard for my scabbard: it is ready to give up the sword!

[*The space around him widens.*]

THE CROWD [*backing away*]. Hey . . . softly, there!

CYRANO [*to* MONTFLEURY]. Go off!

THE CROWD [*closing again, and grumbling*]. Oh! . . . Oh!

CYRANO [*turning suddenly*]. Has somebody objections?

[*The crowd again pushes away from him.*]

A VOICE [*at the back, singing*].

Monsieur de Cyrano, one sees,
Inclines to be tyrannical;
In spite of that tyrannicle
We shall see La Clorise!

THE WHOLE AUDIENCE [*catching up the tune*]. La Clorise! La Clorise!

CYRANO. Let me hear that song again, and I will do you all to death with my stick!

A BURGHER. Samson come back! . . .

CYRANO. Lend me your jaw, good man!

A LADY [*in one of the boxes*]. This is unheard of!

A MAN. It is scandalous!

A BURGHER. It is irritating, to say no more.

A PAGE. What fun it is!

THE PIT. Ksss! . . . Montfleury! . . . Cyrano! . . .

CYRANO. Be still! . . .

THE PIT [*in uproar*]. Hee-haw! . . . Baaaaah! . . . Bow-wow! . . . Cockadoodledooooooo!

CYRANO. I will . . .

A PAGE. Meeeow!

CYRANO. I order you to hold your tongues! . . . I dare the floor collectively to utter another sound! . . . I challenge you, one and all! . . . I will take down your names . . . Step forward, budding heroes! Each in his turn. You shall be given numbers. Come, which one of you will open the joust with me? You, monsieur? No! You? No! The first that offers is promised all the mortuary honors due the brave. Let all who wish to die hold up their hands! [*Silence.*] It is modesty that makes you shrink from the sight of my naked sword? Not a name? Not a hand? — Very good. Then I proceed. [*Turning toward the stage where* MONTFLEURY *is waiting in terror.*] As I was saying, it is my wish to see the stage cured of this tumor. Otherwise . . . [*claps hand to his sword*] the lancet!

MONTFLEURY. I . . .

CYRANO [*gets down from his chair, and sits in the space that has become vacant around him, with the ease of one at home*]. Thrice will I clap my hands, O plenilune! At the third clap . . . eclipse!

THE PIT [*diverted*]. Ah! . . .

CYRANO [*clapping his hands*]. One! . . .

MONTFLEURY. I . . .

A VOICE [*from one of the boxes*]. Do not go! . . .

THE PIT. He will stay! . . . He will go! . . .

MONTFLEURY. Messieurs, I feel . . .

CYRANO. Two! . . .

MONTFLEURY. I feel it will perhaps be wiser . . .

CYRANO. Three! . . .

[MONTFLEURY *disappears, as if through a trap-door. Storm of laughter, hissing, catcalls.*]

THE HOUSE. Hoo! . . . Hoo! . . . Milksop! . . . Come back! . . .

CYRANO [*beaming, leans back in his chair and crosses his legs*]. Let him come back, if he dare!

A BURGHER. The spokesman of the company!

[BELLEROSE *comes forward on the stage and bows.*]

THE BOXES. Ah, there comes Bellerose!

BELLEROSE [*with elegant bearing and diction*]. Noble ladies and gentlemen . . .

THE PIT. No! No! Jodelet . . . We want Jodelet! . . .

JODELET [*comes forward, speaks through his nose*]. Pack of swine!

THE PIT. That is right! . . . Well said! . . . Bravo!

JODELET. Don't bravo me! . . . The portly tragedian, whose paunch is your delight, felt sick! . . .

THE PIT. He is a poltroon! . . .

JODELET. He was obliged to leave . . .

THE PIT. Let him come back!

SOME. No!

OTHERS. Yes! . . .

A YOUTH [*to* CYRANO]. But, when all is said, monsieur, what good grounds have you for hating Montfleury?

CYRANO [*amiably, sitting as before*]. Young gosling, I have two, whereof each, singly, would be ample. Primo: He is an execrable actor, who bellows, and with grunts that would disgrace a water-carrier launches the verse that should go forth as if on pinions! . . . Secundo: is my secret.

THE OLD BURGHER [*behind* CYRANO]. But without compunction you deprive us of hearing La Clorise. I am determined . . .

CYRANO [*turning his chair around so as to face the old gentleman; respectfully*]. Venerable mule, old Baro's verses being what they are, I do it without compunction, as you say.

THE PRÉCIEUSES [*in the boxes*]. Ha! . . . Ho! . . . Our own Baro! . . . My dear, did you hear that? How can such a thing be said? . . . Ha! . . . Ho! . . .

CYRANO [*turning his chair so as to face the boxes; gallantly*]. Beautiful creatures, do you bloom and shine, be ministers of dreams, your smiles our anodyne. Inspire poets, but poems . . . spare to judge!

BELLEROSE. But the money which must be given back at the door!

CYRANO [*turning his chair to face the stage*]. Bellerose, you have said the only intelligent thing that has, as yet, been said! Far from me to wrong by so much as a fringe the worshipful mantle of Thespis. . . . [*He rises and flings a bag upon the stage.*] Catch! . . . and keep quiet!

THE HOUSE [*dazzled*]. Ah! . . . Oh! . . .

JODELET [*nimbly picking up the bag, weighing it with his hand*]. For such a price, you are authorized, monsieur, to come and stop the performance every day!

THE HOUSE. Hoo! . . . Hoo! . . .

JODELET. Should we be hooted in a body! . . .

BELLEROSE. The house must be evacuated!

JODELET. Evacuate it!

[*The audience begins to leave;* CYRANO *looking on with a satisfied air. The crowd, however, becoming interested in the following scene, the exodus is suspended. The women in the boxes who were already standing and had put on their wraps, stop to listen and end by resuming their seats.*]

LE BRET [*to* CYRANO]. What you have done . . . is mad!

A BORE. Montfleury! . . . the eminent actor! . . . What a scandal! . . . But the Duc de Candale is his patron! . . . Have you a patron, you?

CYRANO. No!

THE BORE. You have not?

CYRANO. No!

THE BORE. What? You are not protected by some great nobleman under the cover of whose name . . .

CYRANO [*exasperated*]. No, I have told you twice. Must I say the same thing thrice? No, I have no protector . . . [*hand on sword*] but this will do.

THE BORE. Then, of course, you will leave town.

CYRANO. That will depend.

THE BORE. But the Duc de Candale has a long arm . . .

CYRANO. Not so long as mine . . . [*pointing to his sword*] pieced out with this!

THE BORE. But you cannot have the presumption . . .

CYRANO. I can, yes.

THE BORE. But . . .

CYRANO. And now, . . . face about!

THE BORE. But . . .

CYRANO. Face about, I say . . . or else, tell me why you are looking at my nose.

THE BORE [*bewildered*]. I . . .

CYRANO [*advancing upon him*]. In what is it unusual?

THE BORE [*backing*]. Your worship is mistaken.

CYRANO [*same business as above*]. Is it flabby and pendulous, like a proboscis?

THE BORE. I never said . . .

CYRANO. Or hooked like a hawk's beak?

THE BORE. I . . .

CYRANO. Do you discern a mole upon the tip?

THE BORE. But . . .

CYRANO. Or is a fly disporting himself thereon? What is there wonderful about it?

THE BORE. Oh . . .

CYRANO. Is it a freak of nature?

THE BORE. But I had refrained from casting so much as a glance at it!

CYRANO. And why, I pray, should you not look at it?

THE BORE. I had . . .

CYRANO. So it disgusts you?

THE BORE. Sir . . .

CYRANO. Its color strikes you as unwholesome?

THE BORE. Sir . . .

CYRANO. Its shape, unfortunate?

THE BORE. But far from it!

CYRANO. Then wherefore that depreciating air? . . . Perhaps monsieur thinks it a shade too large?

THE BORE. Indeed not. No, indeed. I think it small . . . small, — I should have said, minute!

CYRANO. What? How? Charge me with such a ridiculous defect? Small, my nose? Ho! . . .

THE BORE. Heavens!

CYRANO. Enormous, my nose! . . . Contemptible stutterer, snub-nosed and flat-headed, be it known to you that I am proud, proud of such an appendage! inasmuch as a great nose is properly the index of an affable, kindly, courteous man, witty, liberal, brave, such as I am! and such as you are for evermore precluded from supposing yourself, deplorable rogue! For the inglorious surface my hand encounters above your ruff, is no less devoid —

[*Strikes him.*]

THE BORE. Aï! aï! . . .

CYRANO. Of pride, alacrity and sweep, of perception and of gift, of heavenly spark, of sumptuousness, to sum up all, of NOSE, than that [*turns him around by the shoulders and suits the action to the word*], which stops my boot below your spine!

THE BORE [*running off*]. Help! The watch! . . .

CYRANO. Warning to the idle who might find entertainment in my organ of smell. . . . And if the facetious fellow be of birth, my custom is, before I let him go, to chasten him, in front, and higher up, with steel, and not with hide!

DE GUICHE [*who has stepped down from the stage with the* MARQUISES]. He is becoming tiresome!

VALVERT [*shrugging his shoulders*]. It is empty bluster!

DE GUICHE. Will no one take him up?

VALVERT. No one? . . . Wait! I will have one of those shots at him! [*He approaches* CYRANO *who is watching him, and stops in front of him, in an attitude of silly swagger.*] Your . . . your nose is . . . errr . . . Your nose . . . is very large!

CYRANO [*gravely*]. Very.

VALVERT [*laughs*]. Ha! . . .

CYRANO [*imperturbable*]. Is that all?

VALVERT. But . . .

CYRANO. Ah, no, young man, that is not enough! You might have said, dear me, there are a thousand things . . . varying the tone . . . For instance . . . here you are: — Aggressive: "I, monsieur, if I had such a nose, nothing would serve but I must cut it off!" Amicable: "It must be in your way while drinking; you ought to have a special beaker made!" Descriptive: "It is a crag! . . . a peak! . . . a promontory! . . . A promontory, did I say? . . . It is a peninsula!" Inquisitive: "What may the office be of that oblong receptacle? Is it an inkhorn or a scissor-case?" Mincing: "Do you so dote on birds, you have, fond as a father, been at pains to fit the little darlings with a roost?" Blunt: "Tell me, monsieur, you, when you smoke, is it possible you blow the vapor through your nose without a neighbor crying 'The chimney is afire'?" Anxious: "Go with caution, I beseech, lest your head, dragged over by that weight, should drag you over!" Tender: "Have a little sunshade made for it! It might get freckled!" Learned: "None but the beast, monsieur,

mentioned by Aristophanes, the hippocampelephantocamelos, can have borne beneath his forehead so much cartilage and bone!" Off-hand: "What, comrade, is that sort of peg in style? Capital to hang one's hat upon!" Emphatic: "No wind can hope, O lordly nose, to give the whole of you a cold, but the Nor-Wester!" Dramatic: "It is the Red Sea when it bleeds!" Admiring: "What a sign for a perfumer's shop!" Lyrical: "Art thou a Triton, and is that thy conch?" Simple: "A monument! When is admission free?" Deferent: "Suffer, monsieur, that I should pay you my respects: that is what I call possessing a house of your own!" Rustic: "Hi, boys! Call that a nose? Ye don't gull me! It's either a prize carrot or else a stunted gourd!" Military: "Level against the cavalry!" Practical: "Will you put it up for raffle? Indubitably, sir, it will be the feature of the game!" And finally in parody of weeping Pyramus: "Behold, behold the nose that traitorously destroyed the beauty of its master! and is blushing for the same!" — That, my dear sir, or something not unlike, is what you would have said to me, had you the smallest leaven of letters or of wit; but of wit, O most pitiable of objects made by God, you never had a rudiment, and of letters, you have just those that are needed to spell "fool!" — But, had it been otherwise, and had you been possessed of the fertile fancy requisite to shower upon me, here, in this noble company, that volley of sprightly pleasantries, still should you not have delivered yourself of so much as a quarter of the tenth part of the beginning of the first. . . . For I let off these good things at myself, and with sufficient zest, but do not suffer another to let them off at me!

De Guiche [*attempting to lead away the amazed vicomte*]. Let be, vicomte!

Valvert. That insufferable haughty bearing! . . . A clodhopper without . . . without so much as gloves . . . who goes abroad without points . . . or bow-knots! . . .

Cyrano. My foppery is of the inner man. I do not trick myself out like a popinjay, but I am more fastidious, if I am not so showy. I would not sally forth, by any chance, not washed quite clean of an affront; my conscience foggy about the eye, my honor crumpled, my nicety black-rimmed. I walk with all upon me furbished bright. I plume myself with independence and straightforwardness. It is not a handsome figure, it is my soul, I hold erect as in a brace. I go decked with exploits in place of ribbon bows. I taper to a point my wit like a moustache. And at my passage through the crowd true sayings ring like spurs!

Valvert. But, sir . . .

Cyrano. I am without gloves? . . . a mighty matter! I only had one left, of a very ancient pair, and even that became a burden to me . . . I left it in somebody's face.

Valvert. Villain, clod-poll, flat-foot, refuse of the earth!

Cyrano [*taking off his hat and bowing as if the* Vicomte *had been introducing himself*]. Ah? . . . And mine, Cyrano-Savinien-Hercule of Bergerac!

Valvert [*exasperated*]. Buffoon!

Cyrano [*giving a sudden cry, as if seized with a cramp*]. Aï! . . .

Valvert [*who had started toward the back, turning*]. What is he saying now?

Cyrano [*screwing his face as if in pain*]. It must have leave to stir . . . it has a cramp! It is bad for it to be kept still so long!

Valvert. What is the matter?

Cyrano. My rapier prickles like a foot asleep!

Valvert [*drawing*]. So be it!

Cyrano. I shall give you a charming little hurt!

Valvert [*contemptuous*]. A poet!

Cyrano. Yes, a poet, . . . and to such an extent, that while we fence, I will, hop! extempore, compose you a ballade!

Valvert. A ballade?

Cyrano. I fear you do not know what that is.

Valvert. But . . .

Cyrano [*as if saying a lesson*]. The ballade is composed of three stanzas of eight lines each . . .

Valvert [*stamps with his feet*]. Oh! . . .

CYRANO [*continuing*]. And an envoi of four.

VALVERT. You . . .

CYRANO. I will with the same breath fight you and compose one. And at the last line, I will hit you.

VALVERT. Indeed you will not!

CYRANO. No? . . . [*Declaiming.*]

Ballade of the duel which in Burgundy House
Monsieur de Bergerac fought with a jack-anapes.

VALVERT. And what is that, if you please?

CYRANO. That is the title.

THE AUDIENCE [*at the highest pitch of excitement*]. Make room! . . . Good sport! . . . Stand aside! . . . Keep still! . . .

[*Tableau. A ring, in the pit, of the interested; the* MARQUISES *and* OFFICERS *scattered among the* BURGHERS *and* COMMON PEOPLE. *The* PAGES *have climbed on the shoulders of various ones, the better to see. All the women are standing in the boxes. At the right,* DE GUICHE *and his attendant gentlemen. At left,* LE BRET, RAGUENEAU, CUIGY, *etc.*]

CYRANO [*closing his eyes a second*]. Wait. I am settling upon the rhymes. There. I have them.

[*In declaiming, he suits the action to the word.*]

Of my broad felt made lighter,
I cast my mantle broad,
And stand, poet and fighter,
To do and to record.
I bow, I draw my sword . . .
En garde! with steel and wit
I play you at first abord . . .
At the last line, I hit!

[*They begin fencing.*]

You should have been politer;
Where had you best be gored?
The left side or the right — ah?
Or next your azure cord?
Or where the spleen is stored?
Or in the stomach pit?
Come we to quick accord . . .
At the last line, I hit!

You falter, you turn whiter?
You do so to afford
Your foe a rhyme in "iter"? . . .
You thrust at me — I ward —
And balance is restored.
Laridon! Look to your spit! . . .
No, you shall not be floored
Before my cue to hit!

[*He announces solemnly.*]

ENVOI

Prince, call upon the Lord! . . .
I skirmish . . . feint a bit . . .
I lunge! . . . I keep my word!
[*The* VICOMTE *staggers;* CYRANO *bows.*]
At the last line, I hit!

[*Acclamations. Applause from the boxes. Flowers and handkerchiefs are thrown. The* OFFICERS *surround and congratulate* CYRANO. RAGUENEAU *dances with delight.* LE BRET *is tearfully joyous and at the same time highly troubled. The friends of the* VICOMTE *support him off the stage.*]

THE CROWD [*in a long shout*]. Ah! . . .

A LIGHT-CAVALRY MAN. Superb!

A WOMAN. Sweet!

RAGUENEAU. Astounding!

A MARQUIS. Novel!

LE BRET. Insensate!

THE CROWD [*pressing around* CYRANO]. Congratulations! . . . Well done! . . . Bravo! . . .

A WOMAN'S VOICE. He is a hero!

A MOUSQUETAIRE [*striding swiftly toward* CYRANO, *with outstretched hand*]. Monsieur, will you allow me? It was quite, quite excellently done, and I think I know whereof I speak. But, as a fact, I expressed my mind before, by making a huge noise. . . . [*He retires.*]

CYRANO [*to* CUIGY]. Who may the gentleman be?

CUIGY. D'Artagnan.

LE BRET [*to* CYRANO, *taking his arm*]. Come, I wish to talk with you.

CYRANO. Wait till the crowd has thinned. [*To* BELLEROSE.] I may remain?

BELLEROSE [*deferentially*]. Why, certainly! . . . [*Shouts are heard outside.*]

JODELET [*after looking*]. They are hooting Montfleury.

BELLEROSE [*solemnly*]. *Sic transit!* . . . [*In a different tone, to the doorkeeper and the candle snuffer.*] Sweep and close. Leave the lights. We shall come back, after eating, to rehearse a new farce for to-morrow.

[*Exeunt* JODELET *and* BELLEROSE, *after bowing very low to* CYRANO.]

THE DOORKEEPER [*to* CYRANO]. Monsieur will not be going to dinner?

CYRANO. I? . . . No.

[*The doorkeeper withdraws.*]

LE BRET [*to* CYRANO]. And this, because? . . .

CYRANO [*proudly*]. Because . . . [*in a different tone, having seen that the doorkeeper is too far to overhear*] I have not a penny!

LE BRET [*making the motion of flinging a bag*]. How is this? The bag of crowns . . .

CYRANO. Monthly remittance, thou lastedst but a day!

LE BRET. And to keep you the remainder of the month? . . .

CYRANO. Nothing is left!

LE BRET. But then, flinging that bag, what a child's prank!

CYRANO. But what a gesture! . . .

THE SWEETMEAT VENDER [*coughing behind her little counter*]. Hm! . . . [CYRANO *and* LE BRET *turn toward her. She comes timidly forward.*] Monsieur, to know you have not eaten . . . makes my heart ache. [*Pointing to the sweetmeat-stand.*] I have there all that is needed . . . [*impulsively*], Help yourself!

CYRANO [*taking off his hat*]. Dear child, despite my Gascon pride, which forbids that I should profit at your hand by the most inconsiderable of dainties, I fear too much lest a denial should grieve you: I will accept therefore . . . [*He goes to the stand and selects.*] Oh, a trifle! . . . A grape off this . . . [*She proffers the bunch, he takes a single grape.*] No . . . one! This glass of water . . . [*She starts to pour wine into it, he stops her.*] No . . . clear! And half a macaroon.

[*He breaks in two the macaroon, and returns half.*]

LE BRET. This comes near being silly!

SWEETMEAT VENDER. Oh, you will take something more! . . .

CYRANO. Yes. Your hand to kiss.

[*He kisses the hand she holds out to him, as if it were that of a princess.*]

SWEETMEAT VENDER. Monsieur, I thank you. [*Curtseys.*] Good-evening! [*Exit.*]

CYRANO [*to* LE BRET]. I am listening. [*He establishes himself before the stand, sets the macaroon before him.*] Dinner! [*does the same with the glass of water*]. Drink! [*and with the grape*]. Dessert! [*He sits down.*] La! let me begin! I was as hungry as a wolf! [*Eating.*] You were saying?

LE BRET. That if you listen to none but those great boobies and swashbucklers your judgment will become wholly perverted. Inquire, will you, of the sensible, concerning the effect produced to-day by your prowesses.

CYRANO [*finishing his macaroon*]. Enormous!

LE BRET. The cardinal . . .

CYRANO [*beaming*]. He was there, the cardinal?

LE BRET. Must have found what you did . . .

CYRANO. To a degree, original.

LE BRET. Still . . .

CYRANO. He is a poet. It cannot be distasteful to him wholly that one should deal confusion to a fellow-poet's play.

LE BRET. But, seriously, you make too many enemies!

CYRANO [*biting into the grape*]. How many, thereabouts, should you think I made to-night?

LE BRET. Eight and forty. Not mentioning the women.

CYRANO. Come, tell them over!

LE BRET. Montfleury, the old merchant, De Guiche, the Vicomte, Baro, the whole Academy . . .

CYRANO. Enough! You steep me in bliss!

LE BRET. But whither will the road you follow lead you? What can your object be?

CYRANO. I was wandering aimlessly; too many roads were open . . . too many

resolves, too complex, allowed of being taken. I took . . .

LE BRET. Which?

CYRANO. By far the simplest of them all. I decided to be, in every matter, always, admirable!

LE BRET [*shrugging his shoulders*]. That will do. — But tell me, will you not, the motive — look, the true one! — of your dislike to Montfleury.

CYRANO [*rising*]. That old Silenus, who has not seen his knees this many a year, still believes himself a delicate desperate danger to the fair. And as he struts and burrs upon the stage, makes sheep's-eyes at them with his moist frog's-eyes. And I have hated him . . . oh, properly! . . . since the night he was so daring as to cast his glance on her . . . her, who — Oh, I thought I saw a slug crawl over a flower!

LE BRET [*amazed*]. Hey? What? Is it possible? . . .

CYRANO [*with a bitter laugh*]. That I should love? [*In a different tone, seriously.*] I love.

LE BRET. And may one know? . . . You never told me . . .

CYRANO. Whom I love? . . . Come, think a little. The dream of being beloved, even by the beautiless, is made, to me, an empty dream indeed by this good nose, my forerunner ever by a quarter of an hour. Hence, whom should I love? . . . It seems superfluous to tell you! . . . I love . . . it was inevitable! . . . the most beautiful that breathes!

LE BRET. The most beautiful? . . .

CYRANO. No less, in the whole world! And the most resplendent, and the most delicate of wit, and among the golden-haired . . . [*with overwhelming despair*]. Still the superlative!

LE BRET. Dear me, what is this fair one?

CYRANO. All unawares, a deadly snare, exquisite without concern to be so. A snare of nature's own, a musk-rose, in which ambush Love lies low. Who has seen her smile remembers the ineffable! There is not a thing so common but she turns it into prettiness; and in the merest nod or beck she can make manifest all the attributes of a goddess. No, Venus! you cannot step into your iridescent shell, nor, Dian, you, walk through the blossoming groves, as she steps into her chair and walks in Paris!

LE BRET. Sapristi! I understand! It is clear!

CYRANO. It is pellucid.

LE BRET. Magdeleine Robin, your cousin?

CYRANO. Yes, Roxane.

LE BRET. But, what could be better? You love her? Tell her so! You covered yourself with glory in her sight a moment since.

CYRANO. Look well at me, dear friend, and tell me how much hope you think can be justly entertained with this protuberance. Oh, I foster no illusions! . . . Sometimes, indeed, yes, in the violet dusk, I yield, even I! to a dreamy mood. I penetrate some garden that lies sweetening the hour. With my poor great devil of a nose I sniff the April. . . . And as I follow with my eyes some woman passing with some cavalier, I think how dear would I hold having to walk beside me, linked like that, slowly, in the soft moonlight, such a one! I kindle — I forget — and then . . . then suddenly I see the shadow of my profile upon the garden-wall!

LE BRET [*touched*]. My friend . . .

CYRANO. Friend, I experience a bad half hour sometimes, in feeling so unsightly . . . and alone.

LE BRET [*in quick sympathy, taking his hand*]. You weep?

CYRANO. Ah, God forbid! That? Never! No, that would be unsightly to excess! That a tear should course the whole length of this nose! Never, so long as I am accountable, shall the divine loveliness of tears be implicated with so much gross ugliness! Mark me well, nothing is so holy as are tears, nothing! and never shall it be that, rousing mirth through me, a single one of them shall seem ridiculous!

LE BRET. Come, do not despond! Love is a lottery.

CYRANO. [*shaking his head*]. No! I love Cleopatra: do I resemble Cæsar? I worship Berenice: do I put you in mind of Titus?

LE BRET. But your courage . . . and your wit! — The little girl who but a moment ago bestowed on you that very modest meal, her eyes, you must have seen as much, did not exactly hate you!

CYRANO [*impressed*]. That is true!

LE BRET. You see? So, then! — But Roxane herself, in following your duel, went lily-pale.

CYRANO. Lily-pale? . . .

LE BRET. Her mind, her heart as well, are struck with wonder! Be bold, speak to her, in order that she may . . .

CYRANO. Laugh in my face! . . . No, there is but one thing upon earth I fear. . . . It is that.

THE DOORKEEPER [*admitting the* DUENNA *to* CYRANO]. Monsieur, you are inquired for.

CYRANO [*seeing the* DUENNA]. Ah, my God! . . . her duenna!

THE DUENNA [*with a great curtsey*]. Somebody wishes to know of her valorous cousin where one may, in private, see him.

CYRANO [*upset*]. See me?

THE DUENNA [*with curtsey*]. See you. There are things for your ear.

CYRANO. There are . . . ?

THE DUENNA [*other curtsey*]. Things.

CYRANO [*staggering*]. Ah, my God! . . .

THE DUENNA. Somebody intends, tomorrow, at the earliest roses of the dawn, to hear Mass at Saint Roch.

CYRANO [*upholds himself by leaning on* LE BRET]. Ah, my God!

THE DUENNA. That over, where might one step in a moment, have a little talk?

CYRANO [*losing his senses*]. Where? . . . I . . . But . . . Ah, my God!

THE DUENNA. Expedition, if you please.

CYRANO. I am casting about . . .

THE DUENNA. Where?

CYRANO. At . . . at . . . at Ragueneau's . . . the pastrycook's.

THE DUENNA. He lodges?

CYRANO. In . . . In Rue . . . Ah, my God! my God! . . . St. Honoré.

THE DUENNA [*retiring*]. We will be there. Do not fail. At seven.

CYRANO. I will not fail. [*Exit* DUENNA.]

CYRANO [*falling on* LE BRET'S *neck*]. To me . . . from her . . . a meeting!

LE BRET. Well, your gloom is dispelled?

CYRANO. Ah, to whatever end it may be, she is aware of my existence!

LE BRET. And now you will be calm?

CYRANO [*beside himself*]. Now, I shall be fulminating and frenetical! I want an army all complete to put to rout! I have ten hearts and twenty arms . . . I cannot now be suited with felling dwarfs to earth. . . . [*At the top of his lungs.*] Giants are what I want!

[*During the last lines, on the stage at the back, shadowy shapes of players have been moving about. The rehearsal has begun; the fiddlers have resumed their places.*]

A VOICE [*from the stage*]. Hey! Psst! Over there! A little lower. We are trying to rehearse!

CYRANO [*laughing*]. We are going!

[*He goes toward the back.*]

[*Through the street door, enter* CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, *several* OFFICERS *supporting* LIGNIÈRE *in a state of complete intoxication.*]

CUIGY. Cyrano!

CYRANO. What is this?

CUIGY. A *turdus vinaticus* we are bringing you.

CYRANO [*recognizing him*]. Lignière! Hey, what has happened to you?

CUIGY. He is looking for you.

BRISSAILLE. He cannot go home.

CYRANO. Why?

LIGNIÈRE [*in a thick voice, showing him a bit of crumpled paper*]. This note bids me beware . . . A hundred men against me . . . on account of lampoon . . . Grave danger threatening me . . . Porte de Nesle . . . must pass it to get home. Let me come and sleep under your roof.

CYRANO. A hundred, did you say? — You shall sleep at home!

LIGNIÈRE [*frightened*]. But . . .

CYRANO [*in a terrible voice, pointing to the lighted lantern which the* DOORKEEPER *stands swinging as he listens to this scene*]. Take that lantern [LIGNIÈRE *hurriedly takes it*] and walk! . . . I swear to tuck you in your bed to-night myself. [*To the* OF-

FICERS.] You, follow at a distance. You may look on!

CUIGY. But a hundred men . . .

CYRANO. Are not one man too many for my mood to-night!

[*The players, in their several costumes, have stepped down from the stage and come nearer.*]

LE BRET. But why take under your especial care . . .

CYRANO. Still Le Bret is not satisfied!

LE BRET. That most commonplace of sots?

CYRANO [*slapping* LIGNIÈRE *on the shoulder*]. Because this sot, this cask of muscatel, this hogshead of rosolio, did once upon a time a wholly pretty thing. On leaving Mass, having seen her whom he loved take holy-water, as the rite prescribes, he, whom the sight of water puts to flight, ran to the holy-water bowl, and stooping over, drank it dry. . . .

AN ACTRESS [*in the costume of soubrette*]. *Tiens*, that was nice!

CYRANO. Was it not, soubrette?

THE SOUBRETTE [*to the others*]. But why are they, a hundred, all against one poor poet?

CYRANO. Let us start! [*To the* OFFICERS.] And you, gentlemen, when you see me attack, whatever you may suppose to be my danger, do not stir to second me!

ANOTHER OF THE ACTRESSES [*jumping from the stage*]. Oh, I will not miss seeing this!

CYRANO. Come!

ANOTHER ACTRESS [*likewise jumping from the stage, to an elderly actor*]. Cassandre, will you not come?

CYRANO. Come, all of you! the Doctor, Isabel, Leander, all! and you shall lend, charming fantastic swarm, an air of Italian farce to the Spanish drama in view. Yes, you shall be a tinkling heard above a roar, like bells about a tambourine!

ALL THE WOMEN [*in great glee*]. Bravo! . . . Hurry! . . . A mantle! . . . A hood!

JODELET. Let us go!

CYRANO [*to the fiddlers*]. You will favor us with a tune, messieurs the violinists!

[*The fiddlers fall into the train. The lighted candles which furnished the footlights are seized and distributed. The procession becomes a torchlight procession.*]

CYRANO. Bravo! Officers, beauty in fancy dress, and, twenty steps ahead . . . [*he takes the position he describes*]. I, by myself, under the feather stuck, with her own hand, by Glory, in my hat! Proud as a Scipio trebly Nasica! — It is understood? Formal interdiction to interfere with me! — We are ready? One! Two! Three! Doorkeeper, open the door!

[*The* DOORKEEPER *opens wide the folding door. A picturesque corner of Old Paris appears, bathed in moonlight.*]

CYRANO. Ah! . . . Paris floats in dim nocturnal mist. . . . The sloping blueish roofs are washed with moonlight. . . . A setting, exquisite indeed, offers itself for the scene about to be enacted. . . . Yonder, under silvery vapor wreathes, like a mysterious magic mirror, glimmers the Seine. . . . And you shall see what you shall see!

ALL. To the Porte de Nesle!

CYRANO [*standing on the threshold*]. To the Porte de Nesle! [*Before crossing it, he turns to the* SOUBRETTE.] Were you not asking, mademoiselle, why upon that solitary rhymster a hundred men were set? [*He draws his sword, and tranquilly.*] Because it was well known he is a friend of mine! [*Exit.*]

[*To the sound of the violins, by the flickering light of the candles, the procession — LIGNIÈRE staggering at the head, the ACTRESSES arm in arm with the OFFICERS, the players capering behind, — follows out into the night.*]

CURTAIN

ACT SECOND

THE COOKSHOP OF POETS

RAGUENEAU'S *shop, vast kitchen at the corner of Rue St. Honoré and Rue de l'Arbre-Sec, which can be seen at the back, through the glass door, gray in the early dawn.*

At the left, in front, a counter overhung by a wrought-iron canopy from which geese, ducks, white peacocks are hanging. In large china jars, tall nosegays composed of the simpler flowers, mainly sunflowers. On the same side, in the middle distance, an enormous fireplace, in front of which, between huge andirons, each of which supports a small iron pot, roasting meats drip into appropriate pans.

At the right, door in the front wing. In the middle distance, a staircase leading to a loft, the interior of which is seen through open shutters; a spread table lighted by a small Flemish candelabrum, shows it to be an eating-room. A wooden gallery continuing the stairway, suggests other similar rooms to which it may lead.

In the centre of the shop, an iron hoop — which can be lowered by means of a rope, — to which large roasts are hooked.

In the shadow, under the stairway, ovens are glowing. Copper molds and saucepans are shining; spits turning, hams swinging, pastry pyramids showing fair. It is the early beginning of the workday. Bustling of hurried scullions, portly cooks and young cook's-assistants; swarming of caps decorated with hen feathers and guinea-fowl wings. Wicker crates and broad sheets of tin are brought in loaded with brioches and tarts.

There are tables covered with meats and cakes; others, surrounded by chairs, await customers. In a corner, a smaller table, littered with papers. At the rise of the curtain, RAGUENEAU *is discovered seated at this table, writing with an inspired air, and counting upon his fingers.*

FIRST PASTRYCOOK [*bringing in a tall molded pudding*]. Nougat of fruit!

SECOND PASTRYCOOK [*bringing in the dish he names*]. Custard!

THIRD PASTRYCOOK [*bringing in a fowl roasted in its feathers*]. Peacock!

FOURTH PASTRYCOOK [*bringing in a tray of cakes*]. Mince-pies!

FIFTH PASTRYCOOK [*bringing in a deep earthen dish*]. Beef stew!

RAGUENEAU [*laying down his pen, and looking up*]. Daybreak already plates with silver the copper pans! Time, Ragueneau, to smother within thee the singing divinity! The hour of the lute will come anon — now is that of the ladle! [*He rises; speaking to one of the cooks.*] You, sir, be so good as to lengthen this gravy, — it is too thick!

THE COOK. How much?

RAGUENEAU. Three feet. [*Goes farther.*]

THE COOK. What does he mean?

FIRST PASTRYCOOK. Let me have the tart!

SECOND PASTRYCOOK. The dumpling!

RAGUENEAU [*standing before the fireplace*]. Spread thy wings, Muse, and fly further, that thy lovely eyes may not be reddened at the sordid kitchen fire! [*To one of the cooks, pointing at some small loaves of bread.*] You have improperly placed the cleft in those loaves; the cæsura belongs in the middle, — between the hemistichs! [*To another of the* COOKS, *pointing at an unfinished pasty.*] This pastry palace requires a roof! [*To a young cook's apprentice, who, seated upon the floor, is putting fowls on a spit.*] And you, on that long spit, arrange, my son, in pleasing alternation, the modest pullet and the splendid turkey-cock, — even as our wise Malherbe alternated of old the greater with the lesser lines, and so with roasted fowls compose a poem!

ANOTHER APPRENTICE [*coming forward with a platter covered by a napkin*]. Master, in your honor, see what I have baked. . . . I hope you are pleased with it!

RAGUENEAU [*ecstatic*]. A lyre!

THE APPRENTICE. Of pie-crust!

RAGUENEAU [*touched*]. With candied fruits!

THE APPRENTICE. And the strings, see, — of spun sugar!

RAGUENEAU [*giving him money*]. Go, drink my health! [*Catching sight of* LISE *who is entering.*] Hush! My wife! . . . Move on, and hide that money. [*To* LISE, *showing her the lyre, with a constrained air.*] Fine, is it not?

LISE. Ridiculous!

[*She sets a pile of wrapping-paper on the counter.*]

RAGUENEAU. Paper bags? Good.

Thanks. [*He examines them.*] Heavens! My beloved books! The masterpieces of my friends, — dismembered, — torn! — to fashion paper bags for penny pies! — Ah, the abominable case is re-enacted of Orpheus and the Mænads!

LISE [*drily*]. And have I not an unquestionable right to make what use I can of the sole payment ever got from your paltry scribblers of uneven lines?

RAGUENEAU. Pismire! Forbear to insult those divine, melodious crickets!

LISE. Before frequenting that low crew, my friend, you did not use to call me a Mænad, — no, nor yet a pismire!

RAGUENEAU. Put poems to such a use!

LISE. To that use and no other!

RAGUENEAU. If with poems you do this, I should like to know, Madame, what you do with prose!

[*Two children have come into the shop.*]

RAGUENEAU. What can I do for you, little ones?

FIRST CHILD. Three patties.

RAGUENEAU [*waiting on them*]. There you are! Beautifully browned, and piping hot.

SECOND CHILD. Please, will you wrap them for us?

RAGUENEAU [*starting, aside*]. There goes one of my bags! [*To the children.*] You want them wrapped, do you? [*He takes one of the paper bags, and as he is about to put in the patties, reads.*] "*No otherwise, Ulysses, from Penelope departing. . . .*" Not this one! [*He lays it aside and takes another. At the moment of putting in the patties, he reads.*] "*Phœbus of the aureate locks . . .*" Not that one!

[*Same business.*]

LISE [*out of patience*]. Well, what are you waiting for?

RAGUENEAU. Here we are. Here we are. Here we are. [*He takes a third bag and resigns himself.*] The sonnet to Phyllis! . . . It is hard, all the same.

LISE. It is lucky you made up your mind. [*Shrugging her shoulders.*] Nicodemus!

[*She climbs on a chair and arranges dishes on a sideboard.*]

RAGUENEAU [*taking advantage of her back being turned, calls back the children who had already reached the door*]. Psst! . . . Children! Give me back the sonnet to Phyllis, and you shall have six patties instead of three! [*The children give back the paper-bag, joyfully take the patties and exeunt.* RAGUENEAU *smoothes out the crumpled paper and reads declaiming.*] "*Phyllis!*" . . . Upon that charming name, a grease-spot! . . . "*Phyllis!*" . . .

[*Enter brusquely* CYRANO.]

CYRANO. What time is it?

RAGUENEAU [*bowing with eager deference*]. Six o'clock.

CYRANO [*with emotion*]. In an hour!

[*He comes and goes in the shop.*]

RAGUENEAU [*following him*]. Bravo! I too was witness . . .

CYRANO. Of what?

RAGUENEAU. Your fight.

CYRANO. Which?

RAGUENEAU. At the Hotel de Bourgogne.

CYRANO [*with disdain*]. Ah, the duel!

RAGUENEAU [*admiringly*]. Yes, — the duel in rhyme.

LISE. He can talk of nothing else.

CYRANO. Let him! . . . It does no harm.

RAGUENEAU [*thrusting with a spit he has seized*]. "*At the last line, I hit!*" "*At the last line I hit!*" — How fine that is! [*With growing enthusiasm.*] "*At the last line, I*" —

CYRANO. What time, Ragueneau?

RAGUENEAU [*remaining fixed in the attitude of thrusting, while he looks at the clock*]. Five minutes past six. — "*I hit!*" [*He recovers from his duelling posture.*] Oh, to be able to make a ballade!

LISE [*to* CYRANO, *who in passing her counter has absentmindedly shaken hands with her*]. What ails your hand?

CYRANO. Nothing. A scratch.

RAGUENEAU. You have been exposed to some danger?

CYRANO. None whatever.

LISE [*shaking her finger at him*]. I fear that is a fib!

CYRANO. From the swelling of my nose? The fib in that case must have been good-sized. . . . [*In a different tone.*] I am

expecting some one. You will leave us alone in here.

RAGUENEAU. But how can I contrive it? My poets shortly will be coming . . .

LISE [*ironically*]. For breakfast!

CYRANO. When I sign to you, you will clear the place of them. — What time is it?

RAGUENEAU. It is ten minutes past six.

CYRANO [*seating himself nervously at* RAGUENEAU'S *table and helping himself to paper*]. A pen?

RAGUENEAU [*taking one from behind his ear, and offering it*]. A swan's quill.

A MOUSQUETAIRE [*with enormous moustachios, enters; in a stentorian voice*]. Good-morning!

[LISE *goes hurriedly to him, toward the back.*]

CYRANO [*turning*]. What is it?

RAGUENEAU. A friend of my wife's, — a warrior, — terrible, from his own report.

CYRANO [*taking up the pen again, and waving* RAGUENEAU *away*]. Hush! . . . [*To himself.*] Write to her, . . . fold the letter, . . . hand it to her, . . . and make my escape. . . . [*Throwing down the pen.*] Coward! . . . But may I perish if I have the courage to speak to her, . . . to say a single word. . . . [*To* RAGUENEAU.] What time is it?

RAGUENEAU. A quarter past six.

CYRANO [*beating his breast*]. A single word of all I carry here! . . . Whereas in writing . . . [*He takes up the pen again.*] Come, let us write it then, in very deed, the love-letter I have written in thought so many times, I have but to lay my soul beside my paper, and copy! [*He writes.*]

[*Beyond the glass door, shadowy lank hesitating shabby forms are seen moving.*]

[*Enter the* POETS, *clad in black, with hanging hose, sadly mudsplashed.*]

LISE [*coming forward, to* RAGUENEAU]. Here they come, your scarecrows!

FIRST POET [*entering, to* RAGUENEAU]. Brother in art! . . .

SECOND POET [*shaking both* RAGUENEAU'S *hands*]. Dear fellow-bard. . . .

THIRD PORT. Eagle of pastrycooks, [*sniffs the air*], your eyrie smells divine!

FOURTH POET. Phœbus turned baker!

FIFTH POET. Apollo master-cook!

RAGUENEAU [*surrounded, embraced, shaken by the hand*]. How at his ease a man feels at once with them!

FIRST POET. The reason we are late, is the crowd at the Porte de Nesle!

SECOND POET. Eight ugly ruffians, ripped open with the sword, lie weltering on the pavement.

CYRANO [*raising his head a second*]. Eight? I thought there were only seven.

[*Goes on with his letter.*]

RAGUENEAU [*to* CYRANO]. Do you happen to know who is the hero of this event?

CYRANO [*negligently*]. I? . . . No.

LISE [*to the* MOUSQUETAIRE]. Do you?

THE MOUSQUETAIRE [*turning up the ends of his moustache*]. Possibly!

CYRANO [*writing; from time to time he is heard murmuring a word or two*]. . . . "I love you . . ."

FIRST POET. A single man, we were told, put a whole gang to flight!

SECOND POET. Oh, it was a rare sight! The ground was littered with pikes, and cudgels . . .

CYRANO [*writing*]. . . . "*Your eyes . . .*"

THIRD POET. Hats were strewn as far as the Goldsmiths' square!

FIRST POET. Sapristi! He must have been a madman of mettle. . . .

CYRANO [*as above*]. " . . . *your lips . . .*"

FIRST POET. An infuriate giant, the doer of that deed!

CYRANO [*same business*]. " . . . *but when I see you, I come near to swooning with a tender dread . . .*"

SECOND POET [*snapping up a tart*]. What have you lately written, Ragueneau?

CYRANO [*same business*]. " . . . *who loves you devotedly . . .*" [*In the act of signing the letter, he stops, rises, and tucks it inside his doublet.*] No need to sign it. I deliver it myself.

RAGUENEAU [*to* SECOND POET]. I have rhymed a recipe.

THIRD POET [*establishing himself beside a tray of cream puffs*]. Let us hear this recipe!

FOURTH POET [*examining a brioche of which he has possessed himself*]. It should

not wear its cap so saucily on one side . . . it scarcely looks well! . . .

[*Bites off the top.*]

First Poet. See, the spice-cake there, ogling a susceptible poet with eyes of almond under citron brows! . . .

[*He takes the spice cake.*]

Second Poet. We are listening!

Third Poet [*slightly squeezing a cream puff between his fingers*]. This puff creams at the mouth. . . . I water!

Second Poet [*taking a bite out of the large pastry lyre*]. For once the Lyre will have filled my stomach!

Ragueneau [*who has made ready to recite, has coughed, adjusted his cap, struck an attitude*]. A recipe in rhyme!

Second Poet [*to* First Poet, *nudging him*]. Is it breakfast, with you?

First Poet [*to* Second Poet]. And with you, is it dinner?

Ragueneau. *How Almond Cheese-Cakes should be made.*

Briskly beat to lightness due,
Eggs, a few;
With the eggs so beaten, beat —
Nicely strained for this same use, —
Lemon-juice,
Adding milk of almonds, sweet.

With fine pastry dough, rolled flat,
After that,
Line each little scalloped mold;
Round the sides, light-fingered, spread
Marmalade;
Pour the liquid eggy gold,

Into each delicious pit;
Prison it
In the oven, — and, bye and bye,
Almond cheese-cakes will in gay
Blond array
Bless your nostril and your eye!

The Poets [*their mouths full*]. Exquisite! . . . Delicious!

One of the Poets [*choking*]. Humph!

[*They go toward the back, eating.* Cyrano, *who has been watching them, approaches* Ragueneau.]

Cyrano. While you recite your works to them, have you a notion how they stuff?

Ragueneau [*low, with a smile*]. Yes, I see them . . . without looking, lest they should be abashed. I get a double pleasure thus from saying my verses over: I satisfy a harmless weakness of which I stand convicted, at the same time as giving those who have not fed a needed chance to feed!

Cyrano [*slapping him on the shoulder*]. You, . . . I like you! [Ragueneau *joins his friends.* Cyrano *looks after him; then, somewhat sharply.*] Hey, Lise! [Lise, *absorbed in tender conversation with the* Mousquetaire, *starts and comes forward toward* Cyrano.] Is that captain . . . laying siege to you?

Lise [*offended*]. My eyes, sir, have ever held in respect those who meant hurt to my character. . . .

Cyrano. For eyes so resolute . . . I thought yours looked a little lanquishing!

Lise [*choking with anger*]. But . . .

Cyrano [*bluntly*]. I like your husband. Wherefore, Madame Lise, I say he shall not be sc . . . horned!

Lise. But . . .

Cyrano [*raising his voice so as to be heard by the* Mousquetaire]. A word to the wise!

[*He bows to the* Mousquetaire, *and after looking at the clock, goes to the door at the back and stands in watch.*]

Lise [*to the* Mousquetaire, *who has simply returned* Cyrano's *bow*]. Really . . . I am astonished at you. . . . Defy him . . . to his face!

The Mousquetaire. To his face, indeed! . . . to his face! . . .

[*He quickly moves off.* Lise *follows him.*]

Cyrano [*from the door at the back, signalling to* Ragueneau *that he should clear the room*]. Pst! . . .

Ragueneau [*urging the* Poets *toward the door at the right*]. We shall be much more comfortable in there. . . .

Cyrano [*impatiently*]. Pst! . . . Pst! . . .

Ragueneau [*driving along the* Poets]. I want to read you a little thing of mine. . . .

First Poet [*despairingly, his mouth full*]. But the provisions. . . .

SECOND POET. Shall not be parted from us!

[*They follow* RAGUENEAU *in procession, after making a raid on the eatables.*]

CYRANO. If I feel that there is so much as a glimmer of hope . . . I will out with my letter ! . . .

[ROXANE, *masked, appears behind the glass door, followed by the* DUENNA.]

CYRANO [*instantly opening the door*]. Welcome! [*Approaching the* DUENNA.] Madame, a word with you!

THE DUENNA. A dozen.

CYRANO. Are you fond of sweets?

THE DUENNA. To the point of indigestion!

CYRANO [*snatching some paper bags off the counter*]. Good. Here are two sonnets of Benserade's . . .

THE DUENNA. Pooh!

CYRANO. Which I fill for you with grated almond drops.

THE DUENNA [*with a different expression*]. Ha!

CYRANO. Do you look with favor upon the cate they call a trifle?

THE DUENNA. I affect it out of measure, when it has whipped cream inside.

CYRANO. Six shall be yours, thrown in with a poem by Saint-Amant. And in these verses of Chapelain I place this wedge of fruit-cake, light by the side of them. . . . Oh! And do you like tarts . . . little jam ones . . . fresh?

THE DUENNA. I dream of them at night!

CYRANO [*loading her arms with crammed paper bags*]. Do me the favor to go and eat these in the street.

THE DUENNA. But . . .

CYRANO [*pushing her out*]. And do not come back till you have finished! [*He closes the door upon her, comes forward toward* ROXANE, *and stands, bareheaded, at a respectful distance.*] Blessed forevermore among all hours the hour in which, remembering that so lowly a being still draws breath, you were so gracious as to come to tell me . . . to tell me? . . .

ROXANE [*who has removed her mask*]. First of all, that I thank you. For that churl, that coxcomb yesterday, whom you taught manners with your sword, is the one whom a great nobleman, who fancies himself in love with me . . .

CYRANO. De Guiche?

ROXANE [*dropping her eyes*]. Has tried to force upon me as a husband.

CYRANO. Honorary? [*Bowing.*] It appears, then, that I fought, and I am glad of it, not for my graceless nose, but your thrice-beautiful eyes.

ROXANE. Further than that . . . I wished . . . But, before I can make the confession I have in mind to make, I must find in you once more the . . . almost brother, with whom as a child I used to play, in the park — do you remember? — by the lake!

CYRANO. I have not forgotten. Yes . . . you came every summer to Bergerac.

ROXANE. You used to fashion lances out of reeds . . .

CYRANO. The silk of the tasselled corn furnished hair for your doll . . .

ROXANE. It was the time of long delightful games . . .

CYRANO. And somewhat sour berries . . .

ROXANE. The time when you did everything I bade you!

CYRANO. Roxane, wearing short frocks, was known as Magdeleine.

ROXANE. Was I pretty in those days?

CYRANO. You were not ill-looking.

ROXANE. Sometimes, in your venturesome climbings you used to hurt yourself. You would come running to me, your hand bleeding. And, playing at being your mamma, I would harden my voice and say . . . [*She takes his hand.*] "Will you never keep out of mischief?" [*She stops short, amazed.*] Oh, it is too much! Here you have done it again! [CYRANO *tries to draw back his hand.*] No! Let me look at it! . . . Are n't you ashamed? A great boy like you! . . . How did this happen, and where?

CYRANO. Oh, fun . . . near the Porte de Nesle.

ROXANE [*sitting down at a table and dipping her handkerchief into a glass of water*]. Let me have it.

CYRANO [*sitting down too*]. So prettily, so cheeringly maternal!

ROXANE. And tell me, while I wash this naughty blood away . . . with how many were you fighting?

CYRANO. Oh, not quite a hundred.

ROXANE. Tell me about it.

CYRANO. No. What does it matter? You tell me, you . . . what you were going to tell me before, and did not dare . . .

ROXANE [*without releasing his hand*]. I do dare, now. I have breathed in courage with the perfume of the past. Oh, yes, now I dare. Here it is. There is some one whom I love.

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE. Oh, he does not know it.

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE. As yet. . . .

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE. But if he does not know it, he soon will.

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE. A poor boy who until now has loved me timidly, from a distance, without daring to speak. . . .

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE. No, leave me your hand. It is hot, this will cool it. . . . But I have read his heart in his face.

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE [*completing the bandaging of his hand with her small pocket-handkerchief*]. And, cousin, is it not a strange coincidence — that he should serve exactly in your regiment!

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE [*laughing*]. Yes. He is a cadet, in the same company!

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE. He bears plain on his forehead the stamp of wit, of genius! He is proud, noble, young, brave, handsome. . . .

CYRANO [*rising, pale*]. Handsome! . . .

ROXANE. What . . . what is the matter?

CYRANO. With me? . . . Nothing! . . . It is . . . it is . . . [*Showing his hand, smiling.*] You know! . . . It smarts a little . . .

ROXANE. In short, I love him. I must tell you, however, that I have never seen him save at the play.

CYRANO. Then you have never spoken to each other?

ROXANE. Only with our eyes.

CYRANO. But, then . . . how can you know? . . .

ROXANE. Oh, under the lindens of Place Royale, people will talk. A trustworthy gossip told me many things!

CYRANO. A cadet, did you say?

ROXANE. A cadet, in your company.

CYRANO. His name?

ROXANE. Baron Christian de Neuvillette.

CYRANO. What? He is not in the cadets.

ROXANE. He is! He certainly is, since morning. Captain Carbon de Castel-Jaloux.

CYRANO. And quickly, quickly, she throws away her heart! . . . But my poor little girl . . .

THE DUENNA [*opening the door at the back*]. Monsieur de Bergerac, I have eaten them, every one!

CYRANO. Now read the poetry printed upon the bags! [*The* DUENNA *disappears.*] My poor child, you who can endure none but the choicest language, who savor eloquence and wit, . . . if he should be a barbarian!

ROXANE. No! no! . . . He has hair like one of D'Urfé's heroes!

CYRANO. If he had on proof as homely a wit as he has pretty hair!

ROXANE. No! No! . . . I can see at a single glance, his utterances are fine, pointed . . .

CYRANO. Ah, yes! A man's utterances are invariably like his moustache! . . . Still, if he *were* a ninny? . . .

ROXANE [*stamping with her foot*]. I should die, there!

CYRANO [*after a time*]. You bade me come here that you might tell me this? I scarcely see the appropriateness, madame.

ROXANE. Ah, it was because some one yesterday let death into my soul by telling me that in your company you are all Gascons, . . . all!

CYRANO. And that we pick a quarrel with every impudent fledgling, not Gascon, admitted by favor to our thoroughbred Gascon ranks? That is what you heard?

ROXANE. Yes, and you can imagine how distracted I am for him!

CYRANO [*in his teeth*]. You well may be!

ROXANE. But I thought, yesterday, when you towered up, great and invincible, giving his due to that miscreant, standing your ground against those caitiffs, I thought "Were he but willing, he of whom all are in awe . . . "

CYRANO. Very well, I will protect your little baron.

ROXANE. Ah, you will . . . you will protect him for me? . . . I have always felt for you the tenderest regard!

CYRANO. Yes, yes.

ROXANE. You will be his friend?

CYRANO. I will!

ROXANE. And never shall he have to fight a duel?

CYRANO. I swear it.

ROXANE. Oh, I quite love you! . . . Now I must go. [*She hurriedly resumes her mask, throws a veil over her head; says absentmindedly.*] But you have not yet told me about last night's encounter. It must have been amazing! . . . Tell him to write to me. [*She kisses her hand to him.*] I love you dearly!

CYRANO. Yes, yes.

ROXANE. A hundred men against you? . . . Well, adieu. We are fast friends.

CYRANO. Yes, yes.

ROXANE. Tell him to write me! . . . A hundred men! You shall tell me another time. I must not linger now . . . A hundred men! What a heroic thing to do!

CYRANO [*bowing*]. Oh, I have done better since!

[*Exit* ROXANE. CYRANO *stands motionless, staring at the ground. Silence. The door at the right opens.* RAGUENEAU *thrusts in his head.*]

RAGUENEAU. May we come back?

CYRANO [*without moving*]. Yes . . .

[RAGUENEAU *beckons, his friends come in again. At the same time, in the doorway at the back, appears* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, *costume of a Captain of the Guards. On seeing* CYRANO, *he gesticulates exaggeratedly by way of signal to some one out of sight.*]

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. He is here!

CYRANO [*looking up*]. Captain!

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX [*exultant*]. Hero! We know all! . . . About thirty of my cadets are out there! . . .

CYRANO [*drawing back*]. But . . .

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX [*trying to lead him off*]. Come! . . . You are in request!

CYRANO. No!

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. They are drinking across the way, at the Cross of the Hilt.

CYRANO. I . . .

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX [*going to the door and shouting toward the street corner, in a voice of thunder*]. The hero refuses. He is not in the humor!

A VOICE [*outside*]. Ah, *sandious!* . . .

[*Tumult outside, noise of clanking swords and of boots drawing nearer.*]

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX [*rubbing his hands*]. Here they come, across the street. . . .

THE CADETS [*entering the cookshop*]. *Mille dious! . . . Capdedious! . . . Mordious! . . . Pocapdedious! . . .*

RAGUENEAU [*backing in alarm*]. Messieurs, are you all natives of Gascony?

THE CADETS. All!

ONE OF THE CADETS [*to* CYRANO]. Bravo!

CYRANO. Baron!

OTHER CADET [*shaking both* CYRANO'S *hands*]. Vivat!

CYRANO. Baron!

THIRD CADET. Let me hug you to my heart!

CYRANO. Baron!

SEVERAL GASCONS. Let us hug him!

CYRANO [*not knowing which one to answer*]. Baron! . . . baron! . . . your pardon!

RAGUENEAU. Messieurs, are you all barons?

THE CADETS. All!

RAGUENEAU. Are they truly?

FIRST CADET. Our coats of arms piled up would dwindle in the clouds!

LE BRET [*entering, running to* CYRANO]. They are looking for you! A crowd, gone mad as March, led by those who were with you last night.

CYRANO [*alarmed*]. You never told them where to find me? . . .

LE BRET [*rubbing his hands*]. I did.

A Burgher [*entering, followed by a number of others*]. Monsieur, the Marais is coming in a body!

[*The street outside has filled with people. Sedan-chairs, coaches stop before the door.*]

Le Bret [*smiling, low to* Cyrano]. And Roxane?

Cyrano [*quickly*]. Be quiet!

The Crowd [*outside*]. Cyrano!

[*A rabble bursts into the cookshop. Confusion. Shouting.*]

Ragueneau [*standing upon a table*]. My shop is invaded! They are breaking everything! It is glorious!

People [*pressing round* Cyrano]. My friend . . . my friend. . . .

Cyrano. I had not so many friends . . . yesterday!

Le Bret. This is success!

A Young Marquis [*running toward* Cyrano, *with outstretched hands*]. If you knew, my dear fellow . . .

Cyrano. Dear? . . . Fellow? . . . Where was it we stood sentinel together?

Other Marquis. I wish to present you, sir, to several ladies, who are outside in my coach. . . .

Cyrano [*coldly*]. But you, to me, by whom will you first be presented?

Le Bret [*astonished*]. But what is the matter with you?

Cyrano. Be still!

A Man of Letters [*with an inkhorn*]. Will you kindly favor me with the details of . . .

Cyrano. No.

Le Bret [*nudging him*]. That is Theophrastus Renaudot, the inventor of the gazette.

Cyrano. Enough!

Le Bret. A sheet close packed with various information! It is an idea, they say, likely to take firm root and flourish!

A Poet [*coming forward*]. Monsieur . . .

Cyrano. Another!

The Poet. I am anxious to make a pentacrostic on your name.

Somebody Else [*likewise approaching* Cyrano]. Monsieur . . .

Cyrano. Enough, I say!

[*At the gesture of impatience which* Cyrano *cannot repress, the crowd draws away.*]

[De Guiche *appears, escorted by officers; among them* Cuigy, Brissaille, *those who followed* Cyrano *at the end of the first act.* Cuigy *hurries toward* Cyrano.]

Cuigy [*to* Cyrano]. Monsieur de Guiche! [*Murmurs. Every one draws back.*] He comes at the request of the Marshal de Gaussion.

De Guiche [*bowing to* Cyrano]. Who wishes to express his admiration for your latest exploit, the fame of which has reached him.

The Crowd. Bravo!

Cyrano [*bowing*]. The Marshal is qualified to judge of courage.

De Guiche. He would scarcely have believed the report, had these gentlemen not been able to swear they had seen the deed performed.

Cuigy. With our own eyes!

Le Bret [*low to* Cyrano, *who wears an abstracted air*]. But . . .

Cyrano. Be silent!

Le Bret. You appear to be suffering . . .

Cyrano [*starting, and straightening himself*]. Before these people? . . . [*His moustache bristles; he expands his chest.*] I . . . suffering? . . . You shall see!

De Guiche [*in whose ear* Cuigy *has been whispering*]. But this is by no means the first gallant achievement marking your career. You serve in the madcap Gascon company, do you not?

Cyrano. In the cadets, yes.

One of the Cadets [*in a great voice*]. Among his countrymen!

De Guiche [*considering the* Gascons, *in line behind* Cyrano]. Ah, ha! — All these gentlemen then of the formidable aspect, are the famous . . .

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. Cyrano!

Cyrano. Captain? . . .

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. My company, I believe, is here in total. Be so obliging as to present it to the Count.

Cyrano [*taking a step toward* De Guiche, *and pointing at the* Cadets].

They are the Gascony Cadets
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux;
Famed fighters, liars, desperates,
They are the Gascony Cadets!
All, better-born than pickpockets,
Talk couchant, rampant, . . . pendent, too!
They are the Gascony Cadets
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux!

Cat-whiskered, eyed like falconets,
Wolf-toothed and heron-legged, they hew
The rabble down that snarls and threats . . .
Cat-whiskered, eyed like falconets!
Great pomp of plume hides and offsets
Holes in those hats they wear askew . . .
Cat-whiskered, eyed like falconets,
They drive the snarling mob, and hew!

The mildest of their sobriquets
Are Crack-my-crown and Run-me-through,
Mad drunk on glory Gascon gets!
These boasters of soft sobriquets
Wherever rapier rapier whets
Are met in punctual rendezvous. . . .
The mildest of their sobriquets
Are Crack-my-crown and Run-me-through!

They are the Gascony Cadets
That give the jealous spouse his due!
Lean forth, adorable coquettes,
They are the Gascony Cadets,
With plumes and scarfs and aigulets!
The husband gray may well look blue. . . .
They are the Gascony Cadets
That give the jealous spouse his due!

De Guiche [*nonchalantly seated in an armchair which* Ragueneau *has hurriedly brought for him*]. A gentleman provides himself to-day, by way of luxury, with a poet. May I look upon you as mine?

Cyrano. No, your lordship, as nobody's.

De Guiche. My uncle Richelieu yesterday found your spontaneity diverting. I shall be pleased to be of use to you with him.

Le Bret [*dazzled*]. Great Goa!

De Guiche. I cannot think I am wrong in supposing that you have rhymed a tragedy?

Le Bret [*whispering to* Cyrano]. My boy, your Agrippina will be played!

De Guiche. Take it to him. . . .

Cyrano [*tempted and pleased*]. Really . . .

De Guiche. He has taste in such matters. He will no more than, here and there, alter a word, recast a passage. . . .

Cyrano [*whose face has instantly darkened*]. Not to be considered, monsieur! My blood runs cold at the thought of a single comma added or suppressed.

De Guiche. On the other hand, my dear sir, when a verse finds favor with him, he pays for it handsomely.

Cyrano. He scarcely can pay me as I pay myself, when I have achieved a verse to my liking, by singing it over to myself!

De Guiche. You are proud.

Cyrano. You have observed it?

One of the Cadets [*coming in with a number of disreputable, draggled tattered hats threaded on his sword*]. Look, Cyrano! at the remarkable feathered game we secured this morning near the Porte de Nesle! The hats of the fugitives!

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. *Spoliæ opimæ!*

All [*laughing*]. Ha! Ha! Ha! . . .

Cuigy. The one who planned that military action, my word! must be proud of it to-day!

Brissaille. Is it known who did it?

De Guiche. I! — [*The laughter stops short.*] They had instructions to chastise — a matter one does not attend to in person, — a drunken scribbler.

[*Constrained silence.*]

The Cadet [*under breath, to* Cyrano, *indicating the hats*]. What can we do with them? They are oily. . . . Make them into a hotch pot?

Cyrano [*taking the sword with the hats, and bowing, as he shakes them off at* De Guiche's *feet*]. Monsieur, if you should care to return them to your friends? . . .

De Guiche [*rises, and in a curt tone*]. My chair and bearers, at once. [*To* Cyrano, *violently.*] As for you, sir . . .

A Voice [*in the street, shouting*]. The chairmen of Monseigneur the Comte de Guiche!

De Guiche [*who has recovered control over himself, with a smile*]. Have you read Don Quixote?

CYRANO. I have. And at the name of that divine madman, I uncover . . .

DE GUICHE. My advice to you is to ponder . . .

A CHAIRMAN [*appearing at the back*]. The chair is at the door!

DE GUICHE. The chapter of the wind mills.

CYRANO [*bowing*]. Chapter thirteen.

DE GUICHE. For when a man attacks them, it often happens . . .

CYRANO. I have attacked, am I to infer, a thing that veers with every wind?

DE GUICHE. That one of their far-reaching canvas arms pitches him down into the mud!

CYRANO. Or up among the stars!

[*Exit* DE GUICHE. *He is seen getting into his chair. The gentlemen withdraw whispering.* LE BRET *goes to the door with them. The crowd leaves. The* CADETS *remain seated at the right and left at tables where food and drink is brought to them.*]

CYRANO [*bowing with a derisive air to those who leave without daring to take leave of him*]. Gentlemen . . . gentlemen . . . gentlemen. . . .

LE BRET [*coming forward, greatly distressed, lifting his hands to Heaven*]. Oh, in what a pretty pair of shoes . . .

CYRANO. Oh, you! . . . I expect you to grumble!

LE BRET. But yourself, you will agree with me that invariably to cut the throat of opportunity becomes an exaggeration! . . .

CYRANO. Yes. I agree. I do exaggerate.

LE BRET [*triumphant*]. You see, you admit it! . . .

CYRANO. But for the sake of principle, and of example, as well, I think it a good thing to exaggerate as I do!

LE BRET. Could you but leave apart, once in a while, your mousquetaire of a soul, fortune, undoubtedly, fame . . .

CYRANO. And what should a man do? Seek some grandee, take him for patron, and like the obscure creeper clasping a tree-trunk, and licking the bark of that which props it up, attain to height by craft instead of strength? No, I thank you. Dedicate, as they all do, poems to financiers? Wear motley in the humble hope of seeing the lips of a minister distend for once in a smile not ominous of ill? No, I thank you. Eat every day a toad? Be threadbare at the belly with grovelling? Have his skin dirty soonest at the knees? Practice feats of dorsal elasticity? No, I thank you. With one hand stroke the goat while with the other he waters the cabbage? Make gifts of senna that counter-gifts of rhubarb may accrue, and indefatigably swing his censer in some beard? No, I thank you. Push himself from lap to lap, become a little great man in a great little circle, propel his ship with madrigals for oars and in his sails the sighs of the elderly ladies? No, I thank you. Get the good editor Sercy to print his verses at proper expense? No, I thank you. Contrive to be nominated Pope in conclaves held by imbeciles in wineshops? No, I thank you. Work to construct a name upon the basis of a sonnet, instead of constructing other sonnets? No, I thank you. Discover talent in tyros, and in them alone? Stand in terror of what gazettes may please to say, and say to himself, "At whatever cost, may I figure in the Paris Mercury!" No, I thank you. Calculate, cringe, peak, prefer making a call to a poem, — petition, solicit, apply? No, I thank you! No, I thank you! No, I thank you! But . . . sing, dream, laugh, loaf, be single, be free, have eyes that look squarely, a voice with a ring; wear, if he chooses, his hat hindside afore; for a yes, for a no, fight a duel or turn a ditty! . . . Work, without concern of fortune or of glory, to accomplish the heart's-desired journey to the moon! Put forth nothing that has not its spring in the very heart, yet, modest, say to himself, "Old man, be satisfied with blossoms, fruits, yea, leaves alone, so they be gathered in your garden and not another man's!" Then, if it happen that to some small extent he triumph, be obliged to render of the glory, to Cæsar, not one jot, but honestly appropriate it all. In short, scorning to be the parasite, the creeper, if even failing to be the oak, rise, not perchance to a great height, . . . but rise alone!

LE BRET. Alone? Good! but not one against all! How the devil did you contract the mania that possesses you for making enemies, always, everywhere?

CYRANO. By seeing you make friends, and smile to those same flocks of friends with a mouth that takes for model an old purse! I wish not to be troubled to return bows in the street, and I exclaim with glee, "An enemy the more!"

LE BRET. This is mental aberration!

CYRANO. I do not dispute it. I am so framed. To displease is my pleasure. I love that one should hate me. Dear friend, if you but knew how much better a man walks under the exciting fire of hostile eyes, and how amused he may become over the spots on his doublet, spattered by Envy and Cowardice! . . . You, the facile friendship wherewith you surround yourself, resembles those wide Italian collars, loose and easy, with a perforated pattern, in which the neck looks like a woman's. They are more comfortable, but of less high effect; for the brow not held in proud position by any constraint from them, falls to nodding this way and that. . . . But for me every day Hatred starches and flutes the ruff whose stiffness holds the head well in place. Every new enemy is another plait in it, adding compulsion, but adding, as well, a ray: for, similar in every point to the Spanish ruff, Hatred is a bondage, . . . but is a halo, too!

LE BRET [*after a pause, slipping his arm through* CYRANO'S]. To the hearing of all be proud and bitter, . . . but to me, below breath, say simply that she does not love you!

CYRANO [*sharply*]. Not a word!

[CHRISTIAN *has come in and mingled with the* CADETS; *they ignore him; he has finally gone to a little table by himself, where* LISE *waits on him.*]

ONE OF THE CADETS [*seated at a table at the back, glass in hand*]. Hey, Cyrano! [CYRANO *turns toward him.*] Your story!

CYRANO. Presently!

[*He goes toward the back on* LE BRET'S *arm. They talk low.*]

THE CADET [*rising and coming toward the front*]. The account of your fight! It will be the best lesson [*stopping in front of the table at which* CHRISTIAN *is sitting*] for this timorous novice!

CHRISTIAN [*looking up*]. . . . Novice?

OTHER CADET. Yes, sickly product of the North!

CHRISTIAN. Sickly?

FIRST CADET [*impressively*]. Monsieur de Neuvillette, it is a good deed to warn you that there is a thing no more to be mentioned in our company than rope in the house of the hanged!

CHRISTIAN. And what is it?

OTHER CADET [*in a terrifying voice*]. Look at me! [*Three times, darkly, he places his finger upon his nose.*] You have understood?

CHRISTIAN. Ah, it is the . . .

OTHER CADET. Silence! . . . Never must you so much as breathe that word, or . . . [*He points toward* CYRANO *at the back talking with* LE BRET.] You will have him, over there, to deal with!

OTHER CADET [*who while* CHRISTIAN *was turned toward the first, has noiselessly seated himself on the table behind him*]. Two persons were lately cut off in their pride by him for talking through their noses. He thought it personal.

OTHER CADET [*in a cavernous voice, as he rises from under the table where he had slipped on all fours*]. Not the remotest allusion, ever, to the fatal cartilage, . . . unless you fancy an early grave!

OTHER CADET. A word will do the business! What did I say? . . . A word? . . . A simple gesture! Make use of your pocket-handkerchief, you will shortly have use for your shroud!

[*Silence. All around* CHRISTIAN *watch him, with folded arms. He rises and goes to* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, *who, in conversation with an officer, affects to notice nothing.*]

CHRISTIAN. Captain!

CARBON [*turning and looking him rather contemptuously up and down*]. Monsieur?

CHRISTIAN. What is the proper course for a man when he finds gentlemen of the South too boastful?

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. He must prove to them that one can be of the North, yet brave.

[*He turns his back upon him.*]

CHRISTIAN. I am much obliged.

FIRST CADET [*to* CYRANO]. And now, the tale of your adventure!

ALL. Yes, yes, now let us hear!

CYRANO [*coming forward among them*]. My adventure? [*All draw their stools nearer, and sit around him, with craned necks.* CHRISTIAN *sits astride a chair.*] Well, then, I was marching to meet them. The moon up in the skies was shining like a silver watch, when suddenly I know not what careful watch-maker having wrapped it in a cottony cloud, there occurred the blackest imaginable night; and, the streets being nowise lighted, — *mordious!* — you could see no further than . . .

CHRISTIAN. Your nose.

[*Silence. Every one slowly gets up; all look with terror at* CYRANO. *He has stopped short, amazed. Pause.*]

CYRANO. Who is that man?

ONE OF THE CADETS [*low*]. He joined this morning.

CYRANO [*taking a step toward* CHRISTIAN]. This morning?

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX [*low*]. His name is Baron de Neuvill . . .

CYRANO [*stopping short*]. Ah, very well. . . . [*He turns pale, then red, gives evidence of another impulse to throw himself upon* CHRISTIAN.] I . . . [*He conquers it, and says in a stifled voice.*] Very well. [*He takes up his tale.*] As I was saying . . . [*with a burst of rage*] *Mordious!* . . . [*He continues in a natural tone*] one could not see in the very least. [*Consternation. All resume their seats, staring at one another.*] And I was walking along, reflecting that for a very insignificant rogue I was probably about to offend some great prince who would bear me a lasting grudge, that, in brief, I was about to thrust my . . .

CHRISTIAN. Nose . . .

[*All get up.* CHRISTIAN *has tilted his chair and is rocking on the hind legs.*]

CYRANO [*choking*]. Finger . . . between the tree and the bark; for the aforesaid prince might be of sufficient power to trip me and throw me . . .

CHRISTIAN. On my nose . . .

CYRANO [*wipes the sweat from his brow*]. But, said I, "Gascony forward! Never falter when duty prompts! Forward, Cyrano!" and, saying this, I advance — when suddenly, in the darkness, I barely avoid a blow . . .

CHRISTIAN. Upon the nose . . .

CYRANO. I ward it . . . and thereupon find myself . . .

CHRISTIAN. Nose to nose . . .

CYRANO [*springing toward him*]. *Ventre-Saint-Gris!* . . . [*All the* GASCONS *rush forward, to see;* CYRANO, *on reaching* CHRISTIAN, *controls himself and proceeds*] . . . with a hundred drunken brawlers, smelling . . .

CHRISTIAN. To the nose's limit . . .

CYRANO [*deathly pale, and smiling*] . . . of garlic and of grease. I leap forward, head lowered . . .

CHRISTIAN. Nose to the wind! . . .

CYRANO. And I charge them. I knock two breathless and run a third through the body. One lets off at me: Paf! and I retort . . .

CHRISTIAN. Pif!

CYRANO [*exploding*]. Death and damnation! Go, — all of you!

[*All the* CADETS *make for the door.*]

FIRST CADET. The tiger is roused at last!

CYRANO. All! and leave me with this man.

SECOND CADET. *Bigre!* When we see him again, it will be in the shape of mince-meat!

RAGUENEAU. Mince-meat? . . .

OTHER CADET. In one of your pies.

RAGUENEAU. I feel myself grow white and flabby as a table-napkin!

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. Let us go!

OTHER CADET. Not a smudge of him will be left!

OTHER CADET. What these walls are about to behold gives me gooseflesh to think upon!

OTHER CADET [*closing the door at the right*]. Ghastly! . . . Ghastly!

[*All have left, by the back or the*

sides, a few up the stairway. CYRANO *and* CHRISTIAN *remain face to face, and look at each other a moment.*]

CYRANO. Embrace me!

CHRISTIAN. Monsieur . . .

CYRANO. Brave fellow.

CHRISTIAN. But what does this . . .

CYRANO. Very brave fellow. I wish you to.

CHRISTIAN. Will you tell me? . . .

CYRANO. Embrace me, I am her brother.

CHRISTIAN. Whose?

CYRANO. Hers!

CHRISTIAN. What do you mean?

CYRANO. Roxane's!

CHRISTIAN [*running to him*]. Heavens! You, her brother?

CYRANO. Or the same thing: her first cousin.

CHRISTIAN. And she has . . .

CYRANO. Told me everything!

CHRISTIAN. Does she love me?

CYRANO. Perhaps!

CHRISTIAN [*seizing his hands*]. How happy I am, monsieur, to make your acquaintance! . . .

CYRANO. That is what I call a sudden sentiment!

CHRISTIAN. Forgive me! . . .

CYRANO [*looking at him, laying his hand upon his shoulder*]. It is true that he is handsome, the rascal!

CHRISTIAN. If you but knew, monsieur, how greatly I admire you! . . .

CYRANO. But all those noses which you . . .

CHRISTIAN. I take them back!

CYRANO. Roxane expects a letter tonight . . .

CHRISTIAN. Alas!

CYRANO. What is the matter?

CHRISTIAN. I am lost if I cease to be dumb!

CYRANO. How is that?

CHRISTIAN. Alas! I am such a dunce that I could kill myself for shame!

CYRANO. But, no . . . no. . . . You are surely not a dunce, if you believe you are! Besides, you scarcely attacked me like a dunce.

CHRISTIAN. Oh, it is easy to find words in mounting to the assault! Indeed, I own to a certain cheap military readiness, but when I am before women, I have not a word to say. . . . Yet their eyes, when I pass by, express a kindness toward me . . .

CYRANO. And do their hearts not express the same when you stop beside them?

CHRISTIAN. No! . . . for I am of those — I recognize it, and am dismayed! — who do not know how to talk of love.

CYRANO. *Tiens!* . . . It seems to me that if Nature had taken more pains with my shape, I should have been of those who do know how to talk of it.

CHRISTIAN. Oh, to be able to express things gracefully!

CYRANO. Oh, to be a graceful little figure of a passing mousquetaire!

CHRISTIAN. Roxane is a précieuse, . . . there is no chance but that I shall be a disillusion to Roxane!

CYRANO [*looking at* CHRISTIAN]. If I had, to express my soul, such an interpreter! . . .

CHRISTIAN [*desperately*]. I ought to have eloquence! . . .

CYRANO [*abruptly*]. Eloquence I will lend you! . . . And you, to me, shall lend all-conquering physical charm . . . and between us we will compose a hero of romance!

CHRISTIAN. What?

CYRANO. Should you be able to say, as your own, things which I day by day would teach you?

CHRISTIAN. You are suggesting? . . .

CYRANO. Roxane shall not have disillusions! Tell me, shall we win her heart, we two as one? will you submit to feel, transmitted from my leather doublet into your doublet stitched with silk, the soul I wish to share?

CHRISTIAN. But Cyrano! . . .

CYRANO. Christian, will you?

CHRISTIAN. You frighten me!

CYRANO. Since you fear, left to yourself, to chill her heart, will you consent, — and soon it will take fire, I vouch for it! — to contribute your lips to my phrases?

CHRISTIAN. Your eyes shine! . . .

CYRANO. Will you?

CHRISTIAN. What, would it please you so much?

CYRANO [*with rapture*]. It would . . . [*remembering, and confining himself to expressing an artistic pleasure*] . . . amuse me! It is an experiment fit surely to tempt a poet. Will you complete me, and let me in exchange complete you? We will walk side by side: you in full light, I in your shadow. . . . I will be wit to you . . . you, to me, shall be good looks!

CHRISTIAN. But the letter, which should be sent to her without delay? . . . Never shall I be able . . .

CYRANO [*taking from his doublet the letter written in the first part of the act*]. The letter? Here it is!

CHRISTIAN. How? . . .

CYRANO. It only wants the address.

CHRISTIAN. I . . .

CYRANO. You can send it without uneasiness. It is a good letter.

CHRISTIAN. You had? . . .

CYRANO. You shall never find us — poets! — without epistles in our pockets to the Chlorises . . . of our imagining! For we are those same that have for mistress a dream blown into the bubble of a name! Take, — you shall convert this feigning into earnest; I was sending forth at random these confessions and laments: you shall make the wandering birds to settle . . . Take it! You shall see . . . I was as eloquent as if I had been sincere! Take, and have done!

CHRISTIAN. But will it not need to be altered in any part? . . . Written without object, will it fit Roxane?

CYRANO. Like a glove!

CHRISTIAN. But . . .

CYRANO. Trust to the blindness of love . . . and vanity! Roxane will never question that it was written for her.

CHRISTIAN. Ah, my friend!

[*He throws himself into* CYRANO'S *arms. They stand embraced.*]

ONE OF THE CADETS [*opening the door a very little*]. Nothing more . . . The stillness of death . . . I dare not look . . . [*He thrusts in his head.*] What is this?

ALL THE CADETS [*entering and seeing* CYRANO *and* CHRISTIAN *locked in each other's arms*]. Ah! . . . Oh! . . .

ONE OF THE CADETS. This passes bounds! [*Consternation.*]

THE MOUSQUETAIRE [*impudent*]. *Ouais?*

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. Our demon is waxen mild as an apostle; smitten upon one nostril, he turns the other also!

THE MOUSQUETAIRE. It is in order now to speak of his nose, is it? [*Calling* LISE, *with a swaggering air.*] Hey, Lise! now listen and look. [*Pointedly sniffing the air.*] Oh, . . . oh, . . . it is surprising! . . . what an odor! [*Going to* CYRANO.] But monsieur must have smelled it, too? Can you tell me what it is, so plain in the air?

CYRANO [*beating him*]. Why, sundry blows!

[*Joyful antics of the* CADETS *in beholding* CYRANO *himself again.*]

CURTAIN

ACT THIRD

ROXANE'S KISS

A small square in the old Marais. Old-fashioned houses. Narrow streets seen in perspective. At the right, ROXANE'S *house and the wall of her garden, above which spreading tree-tops. Over the house-door, a balcony and window. A bench beside the doorstep.*

The wall is overclambered by ivy, the balcony wreathed with jasmine.

By means of the bench and projecting stones in the wall, the balcony can easily be scaled.

On the opposite side, old house in the same style of architecture, brick and stone, with entrance-door. The door-knocker is swaddled in linen.

At the rise of the curtain, the DUENNA *is seated on the bench. The window on* ROXANE'S *balcony is wide open.*

RAGUENEAU, *in a sort of livery, stands near the* DUENNA; *he is finishing the tale of his misfortunes, drying his eyes.*

RAGUENEAU. And then, she eloped with a mousquetaire! Ruined, forsaken, I was hanging myself. I had already taken leave of earth, when Monsieur de Bergerac happening along, unhanged me, and proposed me to his cousin as her steward. . . .

THE DUENNA. But how did you fall into such disaster?

RAGUENEAU. Lise was fond of soldiers, I, of poets! Mars ate up all left over by Apollo. Under those circumstances, you conceive, the pantry soon was bare.

THE DUENNA [*rising and calling toward the open window*]. Roxane, are you ready? . . . They are waiting for us! . . .

ROXANE'S VOICE [*through the window*]. I am putting on my mantle!

THE DUENNA [*to* RAGUENEAU, *pointing at the door opposite*]. It is over there, opposite, we are expected. At Clomire's. She holds a meeting in her little place. A disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments is to be read.

RAGUENEAU. Upon the Softer Sentiments?

THE DUENNA [*coyly*]. Yes! . . . [*Calling toward the window.*] Roxane, you must make haste, or we shall miss the disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments!

ROXANE'S VOICE. I am coming!

[*A sound of string-instruments is heard, drawing nearer.*]

CYRANO'S VOICE [*singing in the wings*]. La! la! la! la! la! . . .

THE DUENNA [*surprised*]. We are to have music?

CYRANO [*enters followed by two* PAGES *with theorbos*]. I tell you it is a demi-semi-quaver! . . . you demi-semi-noddle!

FIRST PAGE [*ironically*]. Monsieur knows then about quavers, semi and demi?

CYRANO. I know music, as do all Gassendi's disciples!

THE PAGE [*playing and singing*]. La! la!

CYRANO [*snatching the theorbo from him and continuing the musical phrase*]. I can carry on the melody. . . . La, la, la, la, . . .

ROXANE [*appearing on the balcony*]. It is you?

CYRANO [*singing upon the tune he is continuing*]. I, indeed, who salute your lilies and present my respects to your ro-o-oses! . . .

ROXANE. I am coming down!

[*She leaves the balcony.*]

THE DUENNA [*pointing at the* PAGES]. What is the meaning of these two virtuosi?

CYRANO. A wager I won, from D'Assoucy. We were disputing upon a question of grammar. Yes! No! Yes! No! Suddenly pointing at these two tall knaves, expert at clawing strings, by whom he constantly goes attended, he said, "I wager a day long of music!" He lost. Until therefore the next rise of the sun, I shall have dangling after me these archlute players, harmonious witnesses of all I do! . . . At first I liked it very well, but now it palls a little. [*To the musicians.*] Hey! . . . Go, from me, to Montfleury, and play him a pavane! . . . [*The* PAGES *go toward the back. To the* DUENNA.] I have come to inquire of Roxane, as I do every evening . . . [*To the* PAGES *who are leaving.*] Play a long time . . . and out of tune! [*To the* DUENNA.] . . . whether in the friend of her soul she can still detect no fault?

ROXANE [*coming out of the house*]. Ah, how beautiful he is, what wit he has, how deeply I love him!

CYRANO [*smiling*]. Christian has so much wit? . . .

ROXANE. Cousin, more than yourself!

CYRANO. I grant you.

ROXANE. There is not one alive, I truly believe, more apt at turning those pretty nothings which yet are everything. . . . Sometimes he is of an absent mood, his muse is wool-gathering, then, suddenly, he will say the most enchanting things!

CYRANO [*incredulous*]. Come! . . .

ROXANE. Oh, it is too bad! Men are all alike, narrow, narrow: because he is handsome, he cannot possibly be witty!

CYRANO. So he talks of the heart in acceptable fashion?

ROXANE. Talks, cousin, is feeble. . . . He dissertates!

CYRANO. And writes? . . .

ROXANE. Still better! Listen now to this . . . [*Declaiming.*] "*The more of my heart you steal from me, the more heart I have!*" [*Triumphantly to* CYRANO.] Well? . . .

CYRANO. Pooh!

ROXANE. And to this: "*Since you have stolen my heart, and since I must suffer, to suffer with send me your own!*"

CYRANO. Now he has too much heart, now he has not enough, . . . just what does he want, in the matter of quantity?

ROXANE. You vex me! You are eaten up with jealousy . . .

CYRANO [*starting*]. *Hein?*

ROXANE. Author's jealousy! And this, could anything be more exquisitely tender? "*Unanimously, believe it, my heart cries out to you, and if kisses could be sent in writing, Love, you should read my letter with your lips . . .*"

CYRANO [*in spite of himself smiling with satisfaction*]. Ha! Ha! Those particular lines seem to me . . . ho! . . . ho! . . . [*remembering himself, disdainfully*] . . . puny, pretty . . .

ROXANE. This, then . . .

CYRANO [*delighted*]. You know his letters by heart?

ROXANE. All!

CYRANO. It is flattering, one cannot deny.

ROXANE. In this art of expressing love he is a master!

CYRANO [*modest*]. Oh, . . . a master!

ROXANE [*peremptory*]. A master!

CYRANO. As you please, then . . . a master!

THE DUENNA [*who had gone toward the back, coming quickly forward*]. Monsieur de Guiche! [*To* CYRANO, *pushing him toward the house.*] Go in! It is perhaps better that he should not see you here! it might put him on the scent . . .

ROXANE [*to* CYRANO]. Yes, of my dear secret! He loves me, he is powerful, . . . he must not find out! He might cut in sunder our loves . . . with an axe!

CYRANO [*going into the house*]. Very well, very well.

[DE GUICHE *appears.*]

ROXANE [*to* DE GUICHE, *with a curtsey*]. I was leaving the house.

DE GUICHE. I have come to bid you farewell.

ROXANE. You are going away?

DE GUICHE. To war.

ROXANE. Ah!

DE GUICHE. I have my orders. Arras is besieged.

ROXANE. Ah! . . . it is besieged?

DE GUICHE. Yes. . . . I see that my departure does not greatly affect you.

ROXANE. Oh! . . .

DE GUICHE. As for me, I own it wrings my heart. Shall I see you again? . . . When? . . . You know that I am made commander-in-general?

ROXANE [*uninterested*]. I congratulate you.

DE GUICHE. Of the Guards.

ROXANE [*starting*]. Ah, . . . of the Guards?

DE GUICHE. Among whom your cousin serves, . . . the man of the boasts and tirades. I shall have opportunity in plenty to retaliate upon him down there.

ROXANE [*suffocating*]. What? The Guards are going down there?

DE GUICHE. Surely. It is my regiment.

ROXANE [*falls sitting upon the bench; aside*]. Christian!

DE GUICHE. What is it troubles you?

ROXANE [*greatly moved*]. This departure . . . grieves me mortally. When one cares for a person . . . to know him away at the war!

DE GUICHE [*surprised and charmed*]. For the first time you utter a kind and feeling word, when I am leaving!

ROXANE [*in a different tone, fanning herself*]. So . . . you are thinking of revenge upon my cousin?

DE GUICHE [*smiling*]. You side with him?

ROXANE. No . . . against him.

DE GUICHE. Do you see much of him?

ROXANE. Very little.

DE GUICHE. He is everywhere to be met with one of the cadets . . . [*trying to remember*] that Neu . . . villen . . . viller . . .

ROXANE. A tall man?

DE GUICHE. Light-haired.

ROXANE. Red-haired.

DE GUICHE. Good-looking.

ROXANE. Pooh!

DE GUICHE. But a fool!

ROXANE. He looks like one. [*In a different tone.*] Your vengeance upon Cyrano is then to place him within reach of shot, which is the thing of all he loves! . . . A miserable vengeance! . . . I know, I do, what would more seriously concern him!

DE GUICHE. And that is?

ROXANE. Why . . . that the regiment should march, and leave him behind, with his beloved cadets, arms folded, the whole war through, in Paris! That is the only way to cast down a man like him. You wish to punish him? Deprive him of danger.

DE GUICHE. A woman! A woman! None but a woman could devise a vengeance of the sort!

ROXANE. His friends will gnaw their fists, and he his very soul, with chagrin at not being under fire; and you will be abundantly avenged!

DE GUICHE [*coming nearer*]. Then you do love me a little? [ROXANE *smiles.*] I wish to see in this fact of your espousing my grudge a proof of affection, Roxane . . .

ROXANE. . . . You may!

DE GUICHE [*showing several folded papers*]. I have here upon me the orders to be transmitted at once to each of the companies . . . except . . . [*he takes one from among the others.*] This one! . . . the company of the cadets . . . [*He puts it in his pocket.*] This, I will keep. [*Laughing.*] Ah, ah, ah! Cyrano! his belligerent humor! . . . So you sometimes play tricks upon people, you? . . .

ROXANE. Sometimes.

DE GUICHE [*very near her*]. I love you to distraction! This evening . . . listen, . . . it is true that I must be gone. But to go when I feel that it is a matter for your caring! Listen! . . . There is, not far from here, in Rue Orléans, a convent founded by the Capuchins. Father Athanasius. A layman may not enter. But the good fathers . . . I fear no difficulty with them! They will hide me up their sleeve . . . their sleeve is wide. They are the Capuchins that serve Richelieu at home. Fearing the uncle, they proportionately fear the nephew. I shall be thought to have left. I will come to you masked. Let me delay by a single day, wayward enchantress!

ROXANE. But if it should transpire . . . your fame . . .

DE GUICHE. Bah!

ROXANE. But . . . the siege . . . Arras! . . .

DE GUICHE. Must wait! Allow me, I beg . . .

ROXANE. No!

DE GUICHE. I beseech!

ROXANE [*tenderly*]. No! Love itself bids me forbid you!

DE GUICHE. Ah!

ROXANE. You must go! [*Aside.*] Christian will stay! [*Aloud.*] For my sake, be heroic . . . Antony!

DE GUICHE. Ah, heavenly word upon your lips! . . . Then you love the one who . . .

ROXANE. Who shall have made me tremble for his sake . . .

DE GUICHE [*in a transport of joy*]. Ah, I will go! [*He kisses her hand.*] Are you satisfied with me?

ROXANE. My friend, I am.

[*Exit* DE GUICHE.]

THE DUENNA [*dropping a mocking curtsey toward his back*]. My friend, we are!

ROXANE [*to the* DUENNA]. Not a word of what I have done: Cyrano would never forgive me for defrauding him of his war! [*She calls toward the house.*] Cousin! [CYRANO *comes out.*] We are going to Clomire's. [*She indicates the house opposite.*] Alcandre has engaged to speak, and so has Lysimon.

THE DUENNA [*putting her little finger to her ear*]. Yes, but my little finger tells me that we shall be too late to hear them!

CYRANO [*to* ROXANE]. Of all things do not miss the trained monkeys!

[*They have reached* CLOMIRE'S *door.*]

THE DUENNA. See! . . . See! they have muffled the door-knocker! [*To the door-knocker.*] You have been gagged, that your voice should not disturb the beautiful lecture, . . . little brutal disturber!

[*She lifts it with infinite care and knocks softly.*]

ROXANE [*seeing the door open*]. Come! [*From the threshold to* CYRANO.] If Christian should come, as probably he will, say he must wait!

CYRANO [*hurriedly, as she is about to disappear*]. Ah! [*She turns.*] Upon what shall you, according to your custom, question him to-day?

ROXANE. Upon . . .

CYRANO [*eagerly*]. Upon? . . .

ROXANE. But you will be silent . . .

CYRANO. As that wall!

ROXANE. Upon nothing! I will say: Forward! Free rein! No curb! Improvise! Talk of love! Be magnificent!

CYRANO [*smiling*]. Good.

ROXANE. Hush!

CYRANO. Hush!

ROXANE. Not a word!

[*She goes in and closes the door.*]

CYRANO [*bowing, when the door is closed*]. A thousand thanks!

[*The door opens again and* ROXANE *looks out.*]

ROXANE. He might prepare his speeches . . .

CYRANO. Ah, no! . . . the devil, no!

BOTH [*together*]. Hush! . . .

[*The door closes.*]

CYRANO [*calling*]. Christian! [*Enter* CHRISTIAN.] I know all that we need to. Now make ready your memory. This is your chance to cover yourself with glory. Let us lose no time. Do not look sullen, like that. Quick! Let us go to your lodgings and I will rehearse you . . .

CHRISTIAN. No!

CYRANO. What?

CHRISTIAN. No, I will await Roxane here.

CYRANO. What insanity possesses you? Come quickly and learn . . .

CHRISTIAN. No, I tell you! I am weary of borrowing my letters, my words . . . of playing a part, and living in constant fear. . . . It was very well at first, but now I feel that she loves me. I thank you heartily. I am no longer afraid. I will speak for myself . . .

CYRANO. *Ouais?* . . .

CHRISTIAN. And what tells you that I shall not know how? I am not such an utter blockhead, after all! You shall see! Your lessons have not been altogether wasted. I can shift to speak without your aid! And, that failing, by Heaven! I shall still know enough to take her in my arms! [*Catching sight of* ROXANE *who is coming out from* CLOMIRE'S.] She is coming! Cyrano, no, do not leave me! . . .

CYRANO [*bowing to him*]. I will not meddle, monsieur.

[*He disappears behind the garden wall.*]

ROXANE [*coming from Clomire's house with a number of people from whom she is taking leave. Curtseys and farewells.*] Barthénoide! . . . Alcandre! . . . Grémione! . . .

THE DUENNA [*comically desperate*]. We missed the disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments!

[*She goes into* ROXANE'S *house.*]

ROXANE [*still taking leave of this one and that*]. Urimédonte! . . . Good-bye!

[*All bow to* ROXANE, *to one another, separate and go off by the various streets.* ROXANE *sees* CHRISTIAN.]

ROXANE. You are here! [*She goes to him.*] Evening is closing round. . . . Wait! . . . They have all gone. . . . The air is so mild. . . . Not a passer in sight. . . . Let us sit here. . . . Talk! . . . I will listen.

CHRISTIAN [*sits beside her, on the bench. Silence.*] I love you.

ROXANE [*closing her eyes*]. Yes. Talk to me of love.

CHRISTIAN. I love you.

ROXANE. Yes. That is the theme. Play variations upon it.

CHRISTIAN. I love . . .

ROXANE. Variations!

CHRISTIAN. I love you so much . . .

ROXANE. I do not doubt it. What further? . . .

CHRISTIAN. And further . . . I should be so happy if you loved me! Tell me, Roxane, that you love me . . .

ROXANE [*pouting*]. You proffer cider to me when I was hoping for champagne! . . . Now tell me a little *how* you love me?

CHRISTIAN. Why . . . very, very much.

ROXANE. Oh! . . . unravel, disentangle your sentiments!

CHRISTIAN. Your throat! . . . I want to kiss it! . . .

ROXANE. Christian!

CHRISTIAN. I love you! . . .

ROXANE [*attempting to rise*]. Again! . . .

CHRISTIAN [*hastily, holding her back*]. No, I do not love you! . . .

ROXANE [*sitting down again*]. That is fortunate!

CHRISTIAN. I adore you!

ROXANE [*rising and moving away*]. Oh! . . .

CHRISTIAN. Yes, . . . love makes me into a fool!

ROXANE [*drily*]. And I am displeased at it! as I should be displeased at your no longer being handsome.

CHRISTIAN. But . . .

ROXANE. Go, and rally your routed eloquence!

CHRISTIAN. I . . .

ROXANE. You love me. I have heard it. Good-evening.

[*She goes toward the house.*]

CHRISTIAN. No, no, not yet! . . . I wish to tell you . . .

ROXANE [*pushing open the door to go in*]. That you adore me. Yes, I know. No! No! Go away! . . . Go! . . . Go! . . .

CHRISTIAN. But I . . .

[*She closes the door in his face.*]

CYRANO [*who has been on the scene a moment, unnoticed*]. Unmistakably a success.

CHRISTIAN. Help me!

CYRANO. No, sir, no.

CHRISTIAN. I will go kill myself if I am not taken back into favor at once . . . at once!

CYRANO. And how can I . . . how, the devil? . . . make you learn on the spot . . .

CHRISTIAN [*seizing him by the arm*]. Oh, there! . . . Look! . . . See!

[*Light has appeared in the balcony window.*]

CYRANO [*with emotion*]. Her window!

CHRISTIAN. Oh, I shall die!

CYRANO. Not so loud!

CHRISTIAN [*in a whisper*]. I shall die!

CYRANO. It is a dark night. . . .

CHRISTIAN. Well?

CYRANO. All may be mended. But you do not deserve . . . There! stand there, miserable boy! . . . in front of the balcony! I will stand under it and prompt you.

CHRISTIAN. But . . .

CYRANO. Do as I bid you!

THE PAGES [*reappearing at the back, to* CYRANO]. Hey!

CYRANO. Hush!

[*He signs to them to lower their voices.*]

FIRST PAGE [*in a lower voice*]. We have finished serenading Montfleury!

CYRANO [*low, quickly*]. Go and stand out of sight. One at this street corner, the other at that; and if any one comes near, play! . . .

SECOND PAGE. What sort of tune, Monsieur the Gassendist?

CYRANO. Merry if it be a woman, mournful if it be a man. [*The* PAGES *disappear, one at each street corner. To* CHRISTIAN.] Call her!

CHRISTIAN. Roxane!

CYRANO [*picking up pebbles and throwing them at the window-pane*]. Wait! A few pebbles . . .

ROXANE [*opening the window*]. Who is calling me?

CHRISTIAN. It is I . . .

ROXANE. Who is . . . I?

CHRISTIAN. Christian!

ROXANE [*disdainfully*]. Oh, you!

CHRISTIAN. I wish to speak with you.

CYRANO [*under the balcony, to* CHRISTIAN]. Speak low! . . .

ROXANE. No, your conversation is too common. You may go home!

CHRISTIAN. In mercy! . . .

ROXANE. No . . . you do not love me any more!

CHRISTIAN [*whom* CYRANO *is prompting*]. You accuse me . . . just Heaven! of loving you no more . . . when I can love you no more!

ROXANE [*who was about to close her window, stopping*]. Ah, that is a little better!

CHRISTIAN [*same business*]. To what a . . . size has Love grown in my . . . sigh-rocked soul which the . . . cruel cherub has chosen for his cradle!

ROXANE [*stepping nearer to the edge of the balcony*]. That is distinctly better! . . . But, since he is so cruel, this Cupid, you were unwise not to smother him in his cradle!

CHRISTIAN [*same business*]. I tried to, but, madame, the . . . attempt was futile. This . . . new-born Love is . . . a little Hercules . . .

ROXANE. Much, much better!

CHRISTIAN [*same business*]. . . . Who found it merest baby-play to . . . strangle the serpents . . . twain, Pride and . . . Mistrust.

ROXANE [*leaning her elbows on the balcony-rail*]. Ah, that is very good indeed! . . . But why do you speak so slowly and stintedly? Has your imagination gout in its wings?

CYRANO [*drawing* CHRISTIAN *under the balcony, and taking his place*]. Hush! It is becoming too difficult!

ROXANE. To-night your words come falteringly. . . . Why is it?

CYRANO [*talking low like* CHRISTIAN]. Because of the dark. They have to grope to find your ear.

ROXANE. My words do not find the same difficulty.

CYRANO. They reach their point at once? Of course they do! That is because I catch them with my heart. My heart, you see, is very large, your ear particularly small. . . . Besides, your words drop . . . that goes quickly; mine have to climb . . . and that takes longer!

ROXANE. They have been climbing more nimbly, however, in the last few minutes.

CYRANO. They are becoming used to this gymnastic feat!

ROXANE. It is true that I am talking with you from a very mountain top!

CYRANO. It is sure that a hard word dropped from such a height upon my heart would shatter it!

ROXANE [*with the motion of leaving*]. I will come down.

CYRANO [*quickly*]. Do not!

ROXANE [*pointing at the bench at the foot of the balcony*]. Then do you get up on the seat! . . .

CYRANO [*drawing away in terror*]. No!

ROXANE. How do you mean . . . no?

CYRANO [*with ever-increasing emotion*]. Let us profit a little by this chance of talking softly together without seeing each other . . .

ROXANE. Without seeing each other? . . .

CYRANO. Yes, to my mind, delectable! Each guesses at the other, and no more. You discern but the trailing blackness of a mantle, and I a dawn-gray glimmer which is a summer gown. I am a shadow merely, a pearly phantom are you! You can never know what these moments are to me! If ever I was eloquent . . .

ROXANE. You were!

CYRANO. My words never till now surged from my very heart . . .

ROXANE. And why?

CYRANO. Because, till now, they must strain to reach you through . . .

ROXANE. What?

CYRANO. Why, the bewildering emotion a man feels who sees you, and whom you look upon! . . . But this evening, it seems to me that I am speaking to you for the first time!

ROXANE. It is true that your voice is altogether different.

CYRANO [*coming nearer, feverishly*]. Yes, altogether different, because, protected by the dark, I dare at last to be myself. I dare . . . [*He stops, and distractedly.*] What was I saying? . . . I do not know. . . . All this . . . forgive my incoherence! . . . is so delicious . . . is so new to me!

ROXANE. So new? . . .

CYRANO [*in extreme confusion, still trying to mend his expressions*]. So new . . . yes, new, to be sincere; the fear of being mocked always constrains my heart . . .

ROXANE. Mocked . . . for what?

CYRANO. Why, . . . for its impulses, its flights! . . . Yes, my heart always cowers behind the defence of my wit. I set forth to capture a star . . . and then, for dread of laughter, I stop and pick a flower . . . of rhetoric!

ROXANE. That sort of flower has its pleasing points . . .

CYRANO. But yet, to-night, let us scorn it!

ROXANE. Never before had you spoken as you are speaking! . . .

CYRANO. Ah, if far from Cupid-darts and quivers, we might seek a place of somewhat fresher things! If instead of drinking, flat sip by sip, from a chiselled golden thimble, drops distilled and dulcified, we might try the sensation of quenching the thirst of our souls by stooping to the level of the great river, and setting our lips to the stream!

ROXANE. But yet, wit . . . fancy . . . delicate conceits . . .

CYRANO. I gave my fancy leave to frame conceits, before, to make you linger, . . . but now it would be an affront to this balm-breathing night, to Nature and the hour, to talk like characters in a pastoral performed at Court! . . . Let us give Heaven leave, looking at us with all its earnest stars, to strip us of disguise and artifice: I fear, . . . oh, fear! . . . lest in our mistaken alchemy sentiment should be subtilized to evaporation; lest the life of the heart should waste in these empty pastimes, and the final refinement of the fine be the undoing of the refined!

ROXANE. But yet, wit, . . . aptness, . . . ingenuity . . .

CYRANO. I hate them in love! Criminal, when one loves, to prolong overmuch that paltry thrust and parry! The moment, however, comes inevitably, — and I pity those for whom it never comes! — in which, we apprehending the noble depth of the love we harbor, a shallow word hurts us to utter!

ROXANE. If . . . if, then, that moment has come for us two, what words will you say to me?

CYRANO. All those, all those, all those that come to me! Not in formal nosegay order, . . . I will throw them you in a wild sheaf! I love you, choke with love, I love you, dear. . . . My brain reels, I can bear no more, it is too much. . . . Your name is in my heart the golden clapper in a bell; and as I know no rest, Roxane, always the heart is shaken, and ever rings your name! . . . Of you, I remember all, all have I loved! Last year, one day, the twelfth of May, in going out at morning you changed the fashion of your hair. . . . I have taken the light of your hair for my light, and as having stared too long at the sun, on everything one sees a scarlet wheel, on everything when I come from my chosen light, my dazzled eye sets swimming golden blots! . . .

ROXANE [*in a voice unsteady with emotion*]. Yes . . . this is love . . .

CYRANO. Ah, verily! The feeling which invades me, terrible and jealous, is love . . . with all its mournful frenzy! It is love, yet self-forgetting more than the wont of love! Ah, for your happiness now readily would I give mine, though you should never know it, might I but, from a distance, sometimes, hear the happy laughter bought by my sacrifice! Every glance of yours breeds in me new strength, new valor! Are you beginning to understand? Tell me, do you grasp my love's measure? Does some little part of my soul make itself felt of you there in the darkness? . . . Oh, what is happening to me this evening is too sweet, too deeply dear! I tell you all these things, and you listen to me, you! Not in my least modest hoping did I ever hope so much! I have now only to die! It is because of words of mine that she is trembling among the dusky branches! For you are trembling, like a flower among leaves! Yes, you tremble, . . . for whether you will or no, I have felt the worshipped trembling of your hand all along this thrilled and blissful jasmine-bough!

[*He madly kisses the end of a pendent bough.*]

ROXANE. Yes, I tremble . . . and weep . . . and love you . . . and am yours! . . . For you have carried me away . . . away! . . .

CYRANO. Then, let death come! I have moved you, I! . . . There is but one thing more I ask . . .

CHRISTIAN [*under the balcony*]. A kiss!

ROXANE [*drawing hastily back*]. What?

CYRANO. Oh!

ROXANE. You ask? . . .

CYRANO. Yes . . . I . . . [*To* CHRISTIAN.] You are in too great haste!

CHRISTIAN. Since she is so moved, I must take advantage of it!

CYRANO [*to* ROXANE]. I . . . Yes, it is true I asked . . . but, merciful heavens! . . . I knew at once that I had been too bold.

ROXANE [*a shade disappointed*]. You insist no more than so?

CYRANO. Indeed, I insist . . . without insisting! Yes! yes! but your modesty shrinks! . . . I insist, but yet . . . the kiss I begged . . . refuse it me!

CHRISTIAN [*to* CYRANO, *pulling at his mantle*]. Why?

CYRANO. Hush, Christian!

ROXANE [*bending over the balcony-rail*]. What are you whispering?

CYRANO. Reproaches to myself for having gone too far; I was saying "Hush, Christian!" [*The theorbos are heard playing.*] Your pardon! . . . a second! . . . Some one is coming!

[ROXANE *closes the window.* CYRANO *listens to the theorbos, one of which plays a lively, and the other a lugubrious tune.*]

CYRANO. A dance? . . . A dirge? . . . What do they mean? Is it a man or a woman? . . . Ah, it is a monk!

[*Enter a* CAPUCHIN MONK, *who goes from house to house, with a lantern, examining the doors.*]

CYRANO [*to the* CAPUCHIN]. What are you looking for, Diogenes?

THE CAPUCHIN. I am looking for the house of Madame . . .

CHRISTIAN. He is in the way!

THE CAPUCHIN. Magdeleine Robin . . .

CYRANO [*pointing up one of the streets*]. This way! . . . Straight ahead . . . go straight ahead . . .

THE CAPUCHIN. I thank you. I will say ten Aves for your peace. [*Exit.*]

CYRANO. My good wishes speed your cowl!

[*He comes forward toward* CHRISTIAN.]

CHRISTIAN. Insist upon the kiss! . . .

CYRANO. No, I will not!

CHRISTIAN. Sooner or later . . .

CYRANO. It is true! It must come, the moment of inebriation when your lips shall imperiously be impelled toward each other, because the one is fledged with youthful gold and the other is so soft a pink! . . . [*To himself.*] I had rather it should be because . . .

[*Sound of the window reopening;* CHRISTIAN *hides under the balcony.*]

ROXANE [*stepping forward on the balcony*]. Are you there? We were speaking of . . . of . . . of a . . .

CYRANO. Kiss. The word is sweet. Why does your fair lip stop at it? If the mere word burns it, what will be of the thing itself? Do not make it into a fearful matter, and then fear! Did you not a moment ago insensibly leave playfulness behind and slip without trepidation from a smile to a sigh, from a sigh to a tear? Slip but a little further in the same blessed direction: from a tear to a kiss there is scarcely a dividing shiver!

ROXANE. Say no more!

CYRANO. A kiss! When all is said, what is a kiss? An oath of allegiance taken in closer proximity, a promise more precise, a seal on a confession, a rose-red dot upon the letter i in loving; a secret which elects the mouth for ear; an instant of eternity murmuring like a bee; balmy communion with a flavor of flowers; a fashion of inhaling each other's heart, and of tasting, on the brink of the lips, each other's soul!

ROXANE. Say no more . . . no more!

CYRANO. A kiss, madame, is a thing so noble that the Queen of France, on the most fortunate of lords, bestowed one, did the queen herself!

ROXANE. If that be so . . .

CYRANO [*with increasing fervor*]. Like Buckingham I have suffered in long silence, like him I worship a queen, like him I am sorrowful and unchanging . . .

ROXANE. Like him you enthrall through the eyes the heart that follows you!

CYRANO [*to himself, sobered*]. True, I am handsome . . . I had forgotten!

ROXANE. Come then and gather it, the supreme flower . . .

CYRANO [*pushing* CHRISTIAN *toward the balcony*]. Go!

ROXANE. . . . tasting of the heart.

CYRANO. Go! . . .

ROXANE. . . . murmuring like a bee . . .

CYRANO. Go!

CHRISTIAN [*hesitating*]. But now I feel as if I ought not!

ROXANE. . . . making Eternity an instant . . .

CYRANO [*pushing* CHRISTIAN]. Scale the balcony, you donkey!

[CHRISTIAN *springs toward the balcony, and climbs by means of the bench, the vine, the posts and balusters.*]

CHRISTIAN. Ah, Roxane!

[*He clasps her to him, and bends over her lips.*]

CYRANO. Ha! . . . What a turn of the screw to my heart! . . . Kiss, banquet of Love at which I am Lazarus, a crumb drops from your table even to me, here in the shade. . . . Yes, in my outstretched heart a little falls, as I feel that upon the lip pressing her lip Roxane kisses the words spoken by me! . . . [*The theorbos are heard.*] A merry tune . . . a mournful one . . . The monk! [*He goes through the pretence of arriving on the spot at a run, as if from a distance; calling.*] Ho, there!

ROXANE. What is it?

CYRANO. It is I. I was passing this way. Is Christian there?

CHRISTIAN [*astonished*]. Cyrano!

ROXANE. Good-evening, cousin!

CYRANO. Cousin, good-evening!

ROXANE. I will come down.

[ROXANE *disappears in the house.*]

[CAPUCHIN *re-enters at the back.*]

CHRISTIAN [*seeing him*]. Oh, again!

[*He follows* ROXANE.]

THE CAPUCHIN. It is here she lives, I am certain . . . Magdeleine Robin.

CYRANO. You said Ro-lin.

THE CAPUCHIN. No, bin, . . . b, i, n, bin!

ROXANE [*appearing upon the threshold, followed by* RAGUENEAU *carrying a lantern, and* CHRISTIAN]. What is it?

THE CAPUCHIN. A letter.

CHRISTIAN. What?

THE CAPUCHIN [*to* ROXANE]. Oh, the contents can be only of a sacred character! It is from a worthy nobleman who . . .

ROXANE [*to* CHRISTIAN]. It is from De Guiche!

CHRISTIAN. He dares to . . . ?

ROXANE. Oh, he will not trouble me much longer! [*Opening the letter.*] I love you, and if . . . [*By the light of* RAGUENEAU'S *lantern she reads, aside, low.*] Mademoiselle: The drums are beating. My regiment is buckling on its corselet. It is about to leave. I am thought to have left already, but lag behind. I am disobeying you. I am in the convent here. I am coming to you, and send you word by a friar, silly as a sheep, who has no suspicion of the import of this letter. You smiled too sweetly upon me an hour ago: I must see you smile again. Provide to be alone, and deign graciously to receive the audacious worshipper, forgiven already, I can but hope, who signs himself your — etc. . . . [*To the* CAPUCHIN.] Father, this is what the letter tells me . . . Listen: [*All draw nearer; she reads aloud.*] Mademoiselle: The wishes of the cardinal may not be disregarded, however hard compliance with them prove. I have therefore chosen as bearer of this letter a most reverend, holy, and sagacious Capuchin; it is our wish that he should at once, in your own dwelling, pronounce the nuptial blessing over you. Christian must secretly become your husband. I send him to you. You dislike him. Bow to Heaven's will in resignation, and be sure that it will bless your zeal, and sure, likewise, mademoiselle, of the respect of him who is and will be ever your most humble and . . . etc.

THE CAPUCHIN [*beaming*]. The worthy gentleman! . . . I knew it! You remember that I said so: The contents of that letter can be only of a sacred character!

ROXANE [*low, to* CHRISTIAN]. I am a fluent reader, am I not?

CHRISTIAN. Hm!

ROXANE [*with feigned despair*]. Ah . . . it is horrible!

THE CAPUCHIN [*who has turned the light of his lantern upon* CYRANO]. You are the one?

CHRISTIAN. No, I am.

THE CAPUCHIN [*turning the light upon him, and as if his good looks aroused suspicion*]. But . . .

ROXANE [*quickly*]. Postscript: You will bestow upon the convent two hundred and fifty crowns.

THE CAPUCHIN. The worthy, worthy gentleman! [*To* ROXANE.] Be reconciled!

ROXANE [*with the expression of a martyr*]. I will endeavor! [*While* RAGUENEAU *opens the door for the* CAPUCHIN, *whom* CHRISTIAN *is showing into the house,* ROXANE *says low to* CYRANO.] De Guiche is coming! . . . Keep him here! Do not let him enter until . . .

CYRANO. I understand! [*To the* CAPUCHIN.] How long will it take to marry them?

THE CAPUCHIN. A quarter of an hour.

CYRANO [*pushing all toward the house*]. Go in! I shall be here!

ROXANE [*to* CHRISTIAN]. Come!

[*They go in.*]

CYRANO. How can I detain De Guiche for a quarter of an hour? [*He jumps upon the bench, climbs the wall toward the balcony-rail.*] So! . . . I climb up here! . . . I know what I will do! . . . [*The theorbos play a melancholy tune.*] Ho, it is a man! [*The tune quavers lugubriously.*] Ho, ho, this time there is no mistake! [*He is on the balcony; he pulls the brim of his hat over his eyes, takes off his sword, wraps his cloak about him, and bends over the balcony-rail.*] No, it is not too far! [*He climbs over the balcony-rail, and reaching for a long bough that projects beyond the garden wall, holds on to it with both hands, ready to let himself drop.*] I shall make a slight commotion in the atmosphere!

DE GUICHE [*enters masked, groping in the dark*]. What can that thrice-damned Capuchin be about?

CYRANO. The devil! if he should recognize my voice? [*Letting go with one hand, he makes show of turning a key.*] Cric! crac! [*Solemnly.*] Cyrano, resume the accent of Bergerac!

DE GUICHE [*looking at* ROXANE'S *house*]. Yes, that is it. I can scarcely see. This mask bothers my eyes!

[*He is about to enter* ROXANE'S *house;* CYRANO *swings from the balcony, holding on to the bough, which bends and lets him down between the door and* DE GUICHE. *He intentionally drops very heavily, to give the effect of dropping from a great height, and lies flattened upon the ground, motionless, as if stunned.*]

DE GUICHE. What is it? [*When he looks up, the bough has swung into place; he sees nothing but the sky.*] Where did this man drop from?

CYRANO [*rising to a sitting posture*]. From the moon!

DE GUICHE. From the . . . ?

CYRANO [*in a dreamy voice*]. What time is it?

DE GUICHE. Is he mad?

CYRANO. What time? What country? What day? What season?

DE GUICHE. But . . .

CYRANO. I am dazed!

DE GUICHE. Monsieur . . .

CYRANO. I have dropped from the moon like a bomb!

DE GUICHE [*impatiently*]. What are you babbling about?

CYRANO [*rising, in a terrible voice*]. I tell you I have dropped from the moon!

DE GUICHE [*backing a step*]. Very well. You have dropped from the moon! . . . He is perhaps a lunatic!

CYRANO [*walking up close to him*]. Not metaphorically, mind that!

DE GUICHE. But . . .

CYRANO. A hundred years ago, or else a minute, — for I have no conception how long I have been falling, — I was up there, in that saffron-colored ball!

DE GUICHE [*shrugging his shoulders*]. You were. Now, let me pass!

CYRANO [*standing in his way*]. Where am I? Be frank with me! Keep nothing from me! In what region, among what people, have I been shot like an aerolite?

DE GUICHE. I wish to pass!

CYRANO. While falling I could not choose my way, and have no notion where I have fallen! Is it upon a moon, or is it upon an earth, I have been dragged by my posterior weight?

DE GUICHE. I tell you, sir . . .

CYRANO [*with a scream of terror at which* DE GUICHE *starts backward a step*]. Great God! . . . In this country men's faces are soot-black!

DE GUICHE [*lifting his hand to his face*]. What does he mean?

CYRANO [*still terrified*]. Am I in Algeria? Are you a native? . . .

DE GUICHE [*who has felt his mask*]. Ah, my mask!

CYRANO [*pretending to be easier*]. So I am in Venice! . . . Or am I in Genoa?

DE GUICHE [*attempting to pass*]. A lady is expecting me!

CYRANO [*completely reassured*]. Ah, then I am in Paris.

DE GUICHE [*smiling in spite of himself*]. The rogue is not far from amusing!

CYRANO. Ah, you are laughing!

DE GUICHE. I laugh . . . but intend to pass!

CYRANO [*beaming*]. To think I should strike Paris! [*Quite at his ease, laughing, brushing himself, bowing.*] I arrived — pray, pardon my appearance! — by the last whirlwind. I am rather unpresentable — Travel, you know! My eyes are still full of star-dust. My spurs are clogged with bristles off a planet. [*Appearing to pick something off his sleeve.*] See, on my sleeve, a comet's hair!

[*He makes a feint of blowing it away.*]

DE GUICHE [*beside himself*]. Sir . . .

CYRANO [*as* DE GUICHE *is about to pass, stretching out his leg as if to show something on it, thereby stopping him*]. Embedded in my calf, I have brought back one of the Great Bear's teeth . . . and as, falling too near the Trident, I strained aside to clear one of its prongs, I landed sitting in Libra, . . . yes, one of the scales! . . . and now my weight is registered up there! [*Quickly preventing* DE GUICHE *from passing, and taking hold of a button on his doublet.*] And if, monsieur, you should take my nose between your fingers and compress it . . . milk would result!

DE GUICHE. What are you saying? Milk? . . .

CYRANO. Of the Milky Way.

DE GUICHE. Go to the devil!

CYRANO. No! I am sent from Heaven, literally. [*Folding his arms.*] Will you believe — I discovered it in passing — that Sirius at night puts on a night-cap? [*Confidentially.*] The lesser Bear is too little yet to bite. . . . [*Laughing.*] I tumbled plump through Lyra, and snapped a string! . . . [*Magnificent.*] But I intend setting all this down in a book, and the golden stars I have brought back caught in my shaggy mantle, when the book is printed, will be seen serving as asterisks!

DE GUICHE. I have stood this long enough! I want . . .

CYRANO. I know perfectly what you want!

DE GUICHE. Man . . .

CYRANO. You want to know, from me, at first hand, what the moon is made of, and whether that monumental pumpkin is inhabited?

DE GUICHE [*shouting*]. Not in the very least! I want . . .

CYRANO. To know how I got there? I got there by a method of my own invention.

DE GUICHE [*discouraged*]. He is mad! . . . stark!

CYRANO [*disdainfully*]. Do not imagine that I resorted to anything so absurd as Regiomontanus's eagle, or anything so lacking in enterprise as Archytas's pigeon! . . .

DE GUICHE. The madman is erudite . . .

CYRANO. I drew up nothing that had ever been thought of before! [DE GUICHE *has succeeded in getting past* CYRANO, *and is nearing* ROXANE'S *door;* CYRANO *follows him, ready to buttonhole him.*] I invented no less than six ways of storming the blue fort of Heaven!

DE GUICHE [*turning around*]. Six, did you say?

CYRANO [*volubly*]. One way was to stand naked in the sunshine, in a harness thickly studded with glass phials, each filled with morning dew. The sun in drawing up the dew, you see, could not have helped drawing me up too!

DE GUICHE [*surprised, taking a step toward* CYRANO]. True. That is one!

CYRANO [*taking a step backward, with a view to drawing* DE GUICHE *away from the door*]. Or else, I could have let the wind into a cedar coffer, then rarefied the imprisoned element by means of cunningly adjusted burning-glasses, and soared up with it!

DE GUICHE [*taking another step toward* CYRANO]. Two!

CYRANO [*backing*]. Or else, mechanic as well as artificer, I could have fashioned a giant grasshopper, with steel joints, which, impelled by successive explosions of saltpeter, would have hopped with me to the azure meadows where graze the starry flocks!

DE GUICHE [*unconsciously following* CYRANO, *and counting on his fingers*]. That makes three!

CYRANO. Since smoke by its nature ascends, I could have blown into an appropriate globe a sufficient quantity to ascend with me!

DE GUICHE [*as above, more and more astonished*]. Four!

CYRANO. Since Phœbe, the moon-goddess, when she is at wane, is greedy, O beeves! of your marrow, . . . with that marrow have besmeared myself!

DE GUICHE [*amazed*]. Five!

CYRANO [*who while talking has backed, followed by* DE GUICHE, *to the further side of the square, near a bench*]. Or else, I could have placed myself upon an iron plate, have taken a magnet of suitable size, and thrown it in the air! That way is a very good one! The magnet flies upward, the iron instantly after; the magnet no sooner overtaken than you fling it up again. . . . The rest is clear! You can go upward indefinitely.

DE GUICHE. Six! . . . But here are six excellent methods! Which of the six, my dear sir, did you select?

CYRANO. A seventh!

DE GUICHE. Did you, indeed? And what was that?

CYRANO. I give you a hundred guesses!

DE GUICHE. I must confess that I should like to know!

CYRANO [*imitating the noise of the surf, and making great mysterious gestures*]. Hoo-ish! hoo-ish!

DE GUICHE. Well! What is that?

CYRANO. Cannot you guess?

DE GUICHE. No!

CYRANO. The tide! . . . At the hour in which the moon attracts the deep, I lay down upon the sands, after a sea-bath . . . and, my head being drawn up first, — the reason of this, you see, that the hair will hold a quantity of water in its mop! — I rose in the air, straight, beautifully straight, like an angel. I rose . . . I rose softly . . . without an effort . . . when, suddenly, I felt a shock. Then . . .

DE GUICHE [*lured on by curiosity, taking a seat on the bench*]. Well, . . . then?

CYRANO. Then . . . [*resuming his natural voice.*] The time is up, monsieur, and I release you. They are married.

DE GUICHE [*getting to his feet with a leap*]. I am dreaming or drunk! That voice? [*The door of* ROXANE'S *house opens; lackeys appear carrying lighted candelabra.* CYRANO *removes his hat.*] And that nose! . . . Cyrano!

CYRANO [*bowing*]. Cyrano. They have exchanged rings within the quarter of the hour.

DE GUICHE. Who have? [*He turns round. Tableau. Behind the lackey stand* ROXANE *and* CHRISTIAN *holding hands. The* CAPUCHIN *follows them smiling.* RAGUENEAU *holds high a flambeau. The* DUENNA *closes the procession, bewildered, in her bedgown.*] Heavens! [*To* ROXANE.] You! [*Recognizing* CHRISTIAN *with amazement.*] He? [*Bowing to* ROXANE.] Your astuteness compels my admiration! [*To* CYRANO.] My compliments to you, ingenious inventor of flying machines. Your experiences would have beguiled a saint on the threshold of Paradise! Make a note of them. . . . They can be used again, with profit, in a book!

CYRANO [*bowing*]. I will confidently follow your advice.

THE CAPUCHIN [*to* DE GUICHE, *pointing at the lovers, and wagging his great white beard with satisfaction*]. A beautiful couple, my son, brought together by you!

DE GUICHE [*eyeing him frigidly*]. As you say! [*To* ROXANE.] And now proceed, Madame, to take leave of your husband.

ROXANE. What?

DE GUICHE [*to* CHRISTIAN]. The regiment is on the point of starting. You are to join it!

ROXANE. To go to war?

DE GUICHE. Of course!

ROXANE. But the cadets are not going!

DE GUICHE. They are! [*Taking out the paper which he had put in his pocket.*] Here is the order. [*To* CHRISTIAN.] I beg you will take it to the Captain, baron, yourself.

ROXANE [*throwing herself in* CHRISTIAN'S *arms*]. Christian!

DE GUICHE [*to* CYRANO, *with a malignant laugh*]. The wedding night is somewhat far as yet!

CYRANO [*aside*]. He thinks that he is giving me great pain!

CHRISTIAN [*to* ROXANE]. Oh, once more, dear! . . . Once more!

CYRANO. Be reasonable . . . Come! . . . Enough!

CHRISTIAN [*still clasping* ROXANE]. Oh, it is hard to leave her. . . . You cannot know . . .

CYRANO [*trying to draw him away*]. I know.

[*Drums are heard in the distance sounding a march.*]

DE GUICHE [*at the back*]. The regiment is on its way!

ROXANE [*to* CYRANO, *while she clings to* CHRISTIAN *whom he is trying to draw away*]. Oh! . . . I entrust him to your care! Promise that under no circumstance shall his life be placed in danger!

CYRANO. I will endeavor . . . but obviously cannot promise . . .

ROXANE [*same business*]. Promise that he will be careful of himself!

CYRANO. I will do my best, but . . .

ROXANE [*as above*]. That during this terrible siege he shall not take harm from the cold!

CYRANO. I will try, but . . .

ROXANE [*as above*]. That he will be true to me!

CYRANO. Of course, but yet, you see . . .

ROXANE [*as above*]. That he will write to me often!

CYRANO [*stopping*]. Ah, that . . . I promise freely!

CURTAIN

ACT FOURTH

THE GASCONY CADETS

The post occupied at the siege of Arras by the company of CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. *At the back, across the whole stage, sloping earthwork. Beyond this is seen a plain stretching to the horizon; the country is covered with constructions relating to the siege. In the distance, against the sky, the outlines of the walls and roofs of Arras. Tents; scattered arms; drums, etc. It is shortly before sunrise. The East is yellow. Sentinels at even intervals. Camp-fires. The* GASCONY CADETS *lie asleep, rolled in their cloaks.* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX *and* LE BRET *are watching. All are very pale and gaunt.* CHRISTIAN *lies sleeping among the others, in his military cape, in the foreground, his face lighted by one of the camp-fires. Silence.*

LE BRET. It is dreadful!

CARBON. Yes. Nothing left.

LE BRET. *Mordious!*

CARBON [*warning him by a gesture to speak lower*]. Curse in a whisper! You will wake them! . . . [*To the* CADETS.] Hush! Go to sleep! [*To* LE BRET.] Who sleeps dines.

LE BRET. Who lies awake misses two good things . . . What a situation!

[*A few shots are heard in the distance.*]

CARBON. The devil take their popping! They will wake my young ones! . . . [*To the* CADETS *who lift their heads.*] Go to sleep!

[*The* CADETS *lie down again. Other shots are heard, nearer.*]

ONE OF THE CADETS [*stirring*]. The devil! Again?

CARBON. It is nothing. It is Cyrano getting home.

[*The heads which had started up, go down again.*]

A SENTINEL [*outside*]. *Ventrebleu!* Who goes there?

CYRANO'S VOICE. Bergerac!

THE SENTINEL [*upon the embankment*]. *Ventrebleu!* Who goes there?

CYRANO [*appearing at the top of the embankment*]. Bergerac, blockhead!

[*He comes down.* LE BRET *goes to him, uneasy.*]

LE BRET. Ah, thank God!

CYRANO [*warning him by a sign to wake no one*]. Hush!

LE BRET. Wounded?

CYRANO. Do you not know that it has become a habit with them to miss me?

LE BRET. To me, it seems a little excessive that you should, every morning, for the sake of taking a letter, risk . . .

CYRANO [*stopping in front of* CHRISTIAN].

I promised that he would write often. [*He looks at* CHRISTIAN.] He sleeps. He has grown pale. If the poor little girl could know that he is starving. . . . But handsome as ever!

LE BRET. Go at once and sleep.

CYRANO. Le Bret, do not grumble! Learn this: I nightly cross the Spanish lines at a point where I know beforehand every one will be drunk.

LE BRET. You ought some time to bring us back some victuals!

CYRANO. I must be lightly burdened to flit through! . . . But I know that there will be events before the evening. The French, unless I am much mistaken, will eat or die.

LE BRET. Oh, tell us!

CYRANO. No, I am not certain . . . You will see!

CARBON. What a shameful reversal of the order of things, that the besieger should be starved!

LE BRET. Alas! never was more complicated siege than this of Arras: We besiege Arras, and, caught in a trap, are ourselves besieged by the Cardinal-prince of Spain. . . .

CYRANO. Some one now ought to come and besiege him.

LE BRET. I am not joking!

CYRANO. Oh, oh!

LE BRET. To think, ungrateful boy, that every day you risk a life precious as yours, solely to carry . . . [CYRANO *goes toward one of the tents.*] Where are you going?

CYRANO. I am going to write another.

[He lifts the canvas flap, and disappears in the tent. Daybreak has brightened. Rosy flush. The city of Arras at the horizon catches a golden light. The report of a cannon is heard, followed at once by a drum-call, very far away, at the left. Other drums beat, nearer. The drum-calls answer one another, come nearer, come very near, and go off, decreasing, dying in the distance, toward the right, having made the circuit of the camp. Noise of general awakening. Voices of officers in the distance.]

CARBON [*with a sigh*]. The réveillé . . . Ah, me! . . . [*The* CADETS *stir in their cloaks, stretch.*] An end to the succulent slumbers! I know but too well what their first word will be!

ONE OF THE CADETS [*sitting up*]. I am famished!

OTHER CADET. I believe I am dying!

ALL. Oh! . . .

CARBON. Get up!

THIRD CADET. I cannot go a step!

FOURTH CADET. I have not strength to stir!

FIRST CADET [*looking at himself in a bit of armor*]. My tongue is coated; it must be the weather that is indigestible!

OTHER CADET. Any one who wants them, can have all my titles of nobility for a Chester cheese . . . or part of one!

OTHER CADET. If my stomach does not have something put into it to take up the attention of my gastric juice, I shall retire into my tent before long . . . like Achilles!

OTHER CADET. Yes, they ought to provide us with bread!

CARBON [*going to the tent into which* CYRANO *has retired; low*]. Cyrano!

OTHER CADETS. We cannot stand this much longer!

CARBON [*as above, at the door of the tent*]. To the rescue, Cyrano! You who succeed so well always in cheering them, come and make them pluck up spirits!

SECOND CADET [*falling upon* FIRST CADET *who is chewing something*]. What are you chewing, man?

FIRST CADET. A bit of gun-tow fried in axle-grease . . . using a burganet as frying pan. The suburbs of Arras are not precisely rich in game. . . .

OTHER CADET [*entering*]. I have been hunting!

OTHER CADET [*the same*]. I have been fishing!

ALL [*rising and falling upon the newcomers*]. What? — what did you catch? — A pheasant? — A carp? — Quick! quick! . . . Let us see!

THE HUNTSMAN. A sparrow!

THE ANGLER. A gudgeon!

ALL [*exasperated*]. Enough of this! Let us revolt!

CARBON. To the rescue, Cyrano!

[*It is now broad daylight.*]

CYRANO [*coming out of the tent, tranquil, a pen behind his ear, a book in his hand*]. What is the matter? [*Silence. To* FIRST CADET.] Why do you go off like that, with that slouching gait?

THE CADET. I have something away down in my heels which inconveniences me.

CYRANO. And what is that?

THE CADET. My stomach.

CYRANO. That is where mine is, too.

THE CADET. Then you too must be inconvenienced.

CYRANO. No. The size of the hollow within me merely increases my sense of my size.

SECOND CADET. I happen to have teeth, long ones!

CYRANO. The better will you bite . . . in good time!

THIRD CADET. I reverberate like a drum!

CYRANO. You will be of use . . . to sound the charge!

OTHER CADET. I have a buzzing in my ears!

CYRANO. A mistake. Empty belly, no ears. You hear no buzzing.

OTHER CADET. Ah, a trifling article to eat . . . and a little oil upon it!

CYRANO [*taking off the* CADET'S *morion and placing it in his hand*]. That is seasoned.

OTHER CADET. What is there we could devour?

CYRANO [*tossing him the book he has been holding*]. Try the Iliad!

OTHER CADET. The minister, in Paris, makes his four meals a day!

CYRANO. You feel it remiss in him not to send you a bit of partridge?

THE SAME. Why should he not? And some wine!

CYRANO. Richelieu, some Burgundy, if you please?

THE SAME. He might, by one of his Capuchins!

CYRANO. By his Eminence, perhaps, in sober gray?

OTHER CADET. No ogre was ever so hungry!

CYRANO. You may have your fill yet of humble-pie!

FIRST CADET [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Forever jests! . . . puns! . . . *mots!*

CYRANO. *Le mot* forever, indeed! And I would wish to die, on a fine evening, under a rose-flushed sky, delivering myself of a good *mot* in a good cause! . . . Ah, yes, the best were indeed, far from feverbed and potion, pierced with the only noble weapon, by an adversary worthy of oneself, to fall upon a glorious field, the point of a sword through his heart, the point of a jest on his lips! . . .

ALL [*in a wail*]. I am hungry!

CYRANO [*folding his arms*]. God ha' mercy! can you think of nothing but eating? . . . Come here, Bertrandou the fifer, once the shepherd! Take from the double case one of your fifes: breathe into it, play to this pack of guzzlers and of gluttons our homely melodies, of haunting rhythm, every note of which appeals like a little sister, through whose every strain are heard strains of beloved voices . . . mild melodies whose slowness brings to mind the slowness of the smoke upcurling from our native hamlet hearths . . . melodies that seem to speak to a man in his native dialect! . . . [*The old fifer sits down and makes ready his fife.*] To-day let the fife, martial unwillingly, be reminded, while your fingers upon its slender stem flutter like birds in a delicate minuet, that before being ebony it was reed; surprise itself by what you make it sing, . . . let it feel restored to it the soul of its youth, rustic and peaceable! [*The old man begins playing Languedoc tunes.*] Listen, Gascons! It is no more, beneath his fingers, the shrill fife of the camp, but the soft flute of the woodland! It is no more, between his lips, the whistling note of battle, but the lowly lay of goatherds leading their flocks to feed! . . . Hark! . . . It sings of the valley, the heath, the forest! . . . of the little shepherd, sunburned under his crimson cap! . . . the green delight of evening on the river! . . . Hark, Gascons all! It sings of Gascony!

[*Every head has drooped; all eyes*

have grown dreamy; tears are furtively brushed away with a sleeve, the hem of a cloak.]

CARBON [*to* CYRANO, *low*]. You are making them weep!

CYRANO. With homesickness! . . . a nobler pain than hunger . . . not physical: mental! I am glad the seat of their suffering should have removed . . . that the gripe should now afflict their hearts!

CARBON. But you weaken them, making them weep!

CYRANO [*beckoning to a drummer*]. Never fear! The hero in their veins is quickly roused. It is enough to . . .

[*He signs to the drummer who begins drumming.*]

ALL [*starting to their feet and snatching up their arms*]. *Hein?* . . . What? . . . What is it?

CYRANO [*smiling*]. You see? . . . The sound of the drum was enough! Farewell dreams, regrets, old homestead, love . . . What comes with the fife with the drum may go . . .

ONE OF THE CADETS [*looking off at the back*]. Ah! ah! . . . Here comes Monsieur de Guiche!

ALL THE CADETS [*grumbling*]. Hoo . . .

CYRANO [*smiling*]. Flattering murmur . . .

ONE OF THE CADETS. He bores us! . . .

OTHER CADET. Showing himself off, with his broad point collar on top of his armor! . . .

OTHER CADET. As if lace were worn with steel!

FIRST CADET. Convenient, if you have a boil on your neck to cover . . .

SECOND CADET. There is another courtier for you!

OTHER CADET. His uncle's own nephew!

CARBON. He is a Gascon, nevertheless!

FIRST CADET. Not genuine! . . . Never trust him. For a Gascon, look you, must be something of a madman: nothing is so deadly to deal with as a Gascon who is completely rational!

LE BRET. He is pale!

OTHER CADET. He is hungry, as hungry as any poor devil of us! But his corselet being freely embellished with gilt studs, his stomach-ache is radiant in the sun!

CYRANO [*eagerly*]. Let us not appear to suffer, either! You, your cards, your pipes, your dice . . . [*All briskly set themselves to playing with cards and dice, on the heads of drums, on stools, on cloaks spread over the ground. They light long tobacco pipes.*] And I will be reading Descartes. . . .

[*He walks to and fro, forward and backward, reading a small book which he has taken from his pocket. Tableau.*]

[*Enter* DE GUICHE. *Every one appears absorbed and satisfied.* DE GUICHE *is very pale. He goes toward* CARBON.]

DE GUICHE [*to* CARBON]. Ah, good-morning. [*They look at each other attentively. Aside, with satisfaction.*] He is pale as plaster.

CARBON [*same business*]. His eyes are all that is left of him.

DE GUICHE [*looking at the* CADETS]. So here are the wrongheaded rascals? . . . Yes, gentlemen, it is reported to me on every side that I am your scoff and derision; that the cadets, highland nobility, Béarn clodhoppers, Périgord baronets, cannot express sufficient contempt for their colonel; call me intriguer, courtier, find it irksome to their taste that I should wear, with my cuirass, a collar of Genoese point, and never cease to air their wondering indignation that a man should be a Gascon without being a vagabond! [*Silence. The* CADETS *continue smoking and playing.*] Shall I have you punished by your captain? . . . I do not like to.

CARBON. Did you otherwise, however, . . . I am free, and punish only . . .

DE GUICHE. Ah? . . .

CARBON. My company is paid by myself, belongs to me. I obey no orders but such as relate to war.

DE GUICHE. Ah, is it so? Enough, then. I will treat your taunts with simple scorn. My fashion of deporting myself under fire is well known. You are not unaware of the manner in which yesterday, at Bapaume, I forced back the columns of the Comte de Bucquoi; gathering my men together to plunge forward like an avalanche, three times I charged him. . . .

CYRANO [*without lifting his nose from his book*]. And your white scarf?

DE GUICHE [*surprised and self-satisfied*]. You heard of that circumstance? . . . In fact, it happened that as I was wheeling about to collect my men for the third charge, I was caught in a stream of fugitives which bore me onward to the edge of the enemy. I was in danger of being captured and cut off with an arquebuse, when I had the presence of mind to untie and let slip to the ground the white scarf which proclaimed my military grade. Thus was I enabled, undistinguished, to withdraw from among the Spaniards, and thereupon returning with my reinspirited men, to defeat them. Well? . . . What do you say to the incident?

[*The* CADETS *have appeared not to be listening; at this point, however, hands with cards and dice-boxes remain suspended in the air; no pipe-smoke is ejected; all expresses expectation.*]

CYRANO. That never would Henry the Fourth, however great the number of his opponents, have consented to diminish his presence by the size of his white plume.

[*Silent joy. Cards fall, dice rattle, smoke upwreathes.*]

DE GUICHE. The trick was successful, however!

[*As before, expectation suspends gambling and smoking.*]

CYRANO. Very likely. But one should not resign the honor of being a target. [*Cards, dice, smoke, fall, rattle, and upwreathe, as before, in expression of increasing glee.*] Had I been at hand when you allowed your scarf to drop — the quality of our courage, monsieur, shows different in this, — I would have picked it up and worn it. . . .

DE GUICHE. Ah, yes, — more of your Gascon bragging! . . .

CYRANO. Bragging? . . . Lend me the scarf. I engage to mount, ahead of all, to the assault, wearing it crosswise upon my breast!

DE GUICHE. A Gascon's offer, that too! You know that the scarf was left in the enemy's camp, by the banks of the Scarpe, where bullets since then have hailed . . . whence no one can bring it back!

CYRANO [*taking a white scarf from his pocket and handing it to* DE GUICHE]. Here it is.

[*Silence. The* CADETS *smother their laughter behind cards and in dice-boxes.* DE GUICHE *turns around, looks at them; instantly they become grave; one of them, with an air of unconcern, whistles the tune played earlier by the fifer.*]

DE GUICHE [*taking the scarf*]. I thank you. I shall be able with this shred of white to make a signal . . . which I was hesitating to make. . . .

[*He goes to the top of the bank and waves the scarf.*]

ALL. What now? . . . What is this?

THE SENTINEL [*at the top of the bank*]. A man . . . over there . . . running off . . .

DE GUICHE [*coming forward again*]. It is a supposed Spanish spy. He is very useful to us. The information he carries to the enemy is that which I give him, — so that their decisions are influenced by us.

CYRANO. He is a scoundrel!

DE GUICHE [*coolly tying on his scarf*]. He is a convenience. We were saying? . . . Ah, I was about to tell you. Last night, having resolved upon a desperate stroke to obtain supplies, the Marshal secretly set out for Dourlens. The royal sutlers are encamped there. He expects to join them by way of the tilled fields; but, to provide against interference, he took with him troops in such number that, certainly, if we were now attacked, the enemy would find easy work. Half of the army is absent from the camp.

CARBON. If the Spaniards knew that, it might be serious. But they do not know.

DE GUICHE. They do. And are going to attack us.

CARBON. Ah!

DE GUICHE. My pretended spy came to warn me of their intention. He said, moreover: I can direct the attack. At what point shall it be? I will lead them to suppose it the least strong, and they will centre their efforts against it. I answered:

Very well. Go from the camp. Look down the line. Let them attack at the point I signal from.

CARBON [*to the* CADETS]. Gentlemen, get ready!

[*All get up. Noise of swords and belts being buckled on.*]

DE GUICHE. They will be here in an hour.

FIRST CADET. Oh! . . . if there is a whole hour! . . .

[*All sit down again, and go on with their games.*]

DE GUICHE [*to* CARBON]. The main object is to gain time. The Marshal is on his way back.

CARBON. And to gain time?

DE GUICHE. You will be so obliging as to keep them busy killing you.

CYRANO. Ah, this is your revenge!

DE GUICHE. I will not pretend that if I had been fond of you, I would have thus singled out you and yours; but, as your bravery is unquestionably beyond that of others, I am serving my King at the same time as my inclination.

CYRANO. Suffer me, monsieur, to express my gratitude.

DE GUICHE. I know that you affect fighting one against a hundred. You will not complain of lacking opportunity.

[*He goes toward the back with* CARBON.]

CYRANO [*to the* CADETS]. We shall now be able, gentlemen, to add to the Gascon escutcheon, which bears, as it is, six chevrons, or and azure, the chevron that was wanting to complete it, — blood-red!

[DE GUICHE *at the back speaks low with* CARBON. *Orders are given. All is made ready to repel an attack.* CYRANO *goes toward* CHRISTIAN, *who stands motionless, with folded arms.*]

CYRANO [*laying his hand on* CHRISTIAN'S *shoulder*]. Christian?

CHRISTIAN [*shaking his head*]. Roxane!

CYRANO. Ah me!

CHRISTIAN. I wish I might at least put my whole heart's last blessing in a beautiful letter!

CYRANO. I mistrusted that it would come to-day . . . [*he takes a letter from his doublet*] and I have written your farewells.

CHRISTIAN. Let me see!

CYRANO. You wish to see it? . . .

CHRISTIAN [*taking the letter*]. Yes! [*He opens the letter, begins to read, stops short.*] Ah? . . .

CYRANO. What?

CHRISTIAN. That little round blister?

CYRANO [*hurriedly taking back the letter, and looking at it with an artless air*]. A blister?

CHRISTIAN. It is a tear!

CYRANO. It looks like one, does it not? . . . A poet, you see, is sometimes caught in his own snare, — that is what constitutes the interest, the charm! . . . This letter, you must know, is very touching. In writing it I apparently made myself shed tears.

CHRISTIAN. Shed tears? . . .

CYRANO. Yes, because . . . well, to die is not terrible at all . . . but never to see her again, . . . never! . . . that, you know, is horrible beyond all thinking. . . . And, things having taken the turn they have, I shall not see her . . . [CHRISTIAN *looks at him*] we shall not see her . . . [*hastily*] you will not see her. . . .

CHRISTIAN [*snatching the letter from him*]. Give me the letter! [*Noise in the distance.*]

VOICE OF A SENTINEL. *Ventrebleu*, who goes there?

[*Shots. Noise of voices, tinkling of bells.*]

CARBON. What is it?

THE SENTINEL [*on the top of the bank*]. A coach! [*All run to see.*]

[*Noisy exclamations.*] What? — In the camp? — It is driving into the camp! — It comes from the direction of the enemy! The devil! Fire upon it! — No! the coachman is shouting something! — What does he say? — He shouts: Service of the King!

DE GUICHE. What? Service of the King?

[*All come down from the bank and fall into order.*]

CARBON. Hats off, all!

DE GUICHE [*at the corner*]. Service of the King! Stand back, low rabble, and give it room to turn around with a handsome sweep!

[*The coach comes in at a trot. It is covered with mud and dust. The curtains are drawn. Two lackeys behind. It comes to a standstill.*]

CARBON [*shouting*]. Salute!

[*Drums roll. All the* CADETS *uncover.*]

DE GUICHE. Let down the steps!

[*Two men hurry forward. The coach door opens.*]

ROXANE [*stepping from the carriage*]. Good-morning!

[*At the sound of a feminine voice, all the men, in the act of bowing low, straighten themselves. Consternation.*]

DE GUICHE. Service of the King! You?

ROXANE. Of the only King! . . . of Love!

CYRANO. Ah, great God!

CHRISTIAN [*rushing to her*]. You! Why are you here?

ROXANE. This siege lasted too long!

CHRISTIAN. Why have you come?

ROXANE. I will tell you!

CYRANO [*who at the sound of her voice has started, then stood motionless without venturing to look her way*]. God! . . . can I trust myself to look at her?

DE GUICHE. You cannot remain here.

ROXANE. But I can, — I can, indeed! Will you favor me with a drum? [*She seats herself upon a drum brought forward for her.*] There! I thank you! [*She laughs.*] They fired upon my carriage. [*Proudly.*] A patrol! — It does look rather as if it were made out of a pumpkin, does it not? like Cinderella's coach! and the footmen made out of rats! [*Blowing a kiss to* CHRISTIAN.] How do you do? [*Looking at them all.*] You do not look overjoyed! . . . Arras is a long way from Paris, do you know it? [*Catching sight of* CYRANO.] Cousin, delighted!

CYRANO [*coming toward her*]. But how did you . . . ?

ROXANE. How did I find the army? Dear me, cousin, that was simple: I followed straight along the line of devastation. . . . Ah, I should never have believed in such horrors had I not seen them! Gentlemen, if that is the service of your King, I like mine better!

CYRANO. But this is mad! . . . By what way did you come?

ROXANE. Way? . . . I drove through the Spaniards' camp.

FIRST CADET. Ah, what will keep lovely woman from her way!

DE GUICHE. But how did you contrive to get through their lines?

LE BRET. That must have been difficult . . .

ROXANE. No, not very. I simply drove through them, in my coach, at a trot. If a hidalgo, with arrogant front, showed likely to stop us, I put my face at the window, wearing my sweetest smile, and, those gentlemen being, — let the French not grudge my saying so! — the most gallant in the world, . . . I passed!

CARBON. Such a smile is a passport, certainly! . . . But you must have been not unfrequently bidden to stand and deliver where you were going?

ROXANE. Not unfrequently, you are right. Whereupon I would say, "I am going to see my lover!" At once, the fiercest looking Spaniard of them all would gravely close my carriage door; and, with a gesture the King might emulate, motion aside the musket-barrels levelled at me; and, superb at once for grace and haughtiness, bringing his spurs together, and lifting his plumed hat, bow low and say, "Pass, señorita, pass!"

CHRISTIAN. But, Roxane . . .

ROXANE. I said, "My lover!" yes, forgive me! — You see, if I had said, "My husband!" they would never have let me by!

CHRISTIAN. But . . .

ROXANE. What troubles you?

DE GUICHE. You must leave at once.

ROXANE. I?

CYRANO. At once!

LE BRET. As fast as you can.

CHRISTIAN. Yes, you must.

ROXANE. But why?

CHRISTIAN [*embarrassed*]. Because . . .

CYRANO [*embarrassed too*]. In three quarters of an hour . . .

DE GUICHE [*the same*]. Or an hour . . .

CARBON [*the same*]. You had much better . . .

LE BRET [*the same*]. You might . . .

ROXANE. I shall remain. You are going to fight.

ALL. Oh, no! . . . No!

ROXANE. He is my husband! [*She throws herself in* CHRISTIAN'S *arms.*] Let me be killed with you!

CHRISTIAN. How your eyes shine!

ROXANE. I will tell you why they shine!

DE GUICHE [*desperately*]. It is a post of horrible probabilities!

ROXANE [*turning toward him*]. What — of horrible? . . .

CYRANO. In proof of which he appointed us to it! . . .

ROXANE. Ah, you wish me made a widow?

DE GUICHE. I swear to you . . .

ROXANE. No! Now I have lost all regard. . . . Now I will surely not go. . . . Besides, I think it fun!

CYRANO. What? The précieuse contained a heroine?

ROXANE. Monsieur de Bergerac, I am a cousin of yours!

ONE OF THE CADETS. Never think but that we will take good care of you!

ROXANE [*more and more excited*]. I am sure you will, my friends!

OTHER CADET. The whole camp smells of iris!

ROXANE. By good fortune I put on a hat that will look well in battle! [*Glancing toward* DE GUICHE.] But perhaps it is time the Count should go. — The battle might begin.

DE GUICHE. Ah, it is intolerable! — I am going to inspect my guns, and coming back. — You still have time: think better of it!

ROXANE. Never! [*Exit* DE GUICHE.]

CHRISTIAN [*imploring*]. Roxane!

ROXANE. No!

FIRST CADET. She is going to stay!

ALL [*hurrying about, pushing one another, snatching things from one another*]. A comb! — Soap! — My jacket is torn, a needle! — A ribbon! — Lend me your pocket-mirror! — My cuffs! — Curling-irons! — A razor!

ROXANE [*to* CYRANO, *who is still pleading with her*]. No! Nothing shall prevail upon me to stir from this spot!

CARBON [*after having, like the others, tightened his belt, dusted himself, brushed his hat, straightened his feather, pulled down his cuffs, approaches* ROXANE, *and ceremoniously*]. It is, perhaps, proper, since you are going to stay, that I should present to you a few of the gentlemen about to have the honor of dying in your presence . . . [ROXANE *bows, and stands waiting, with her arm through* CHRISTIAN'S.] Baron Peyrescous de Colignac!

THE CADET [*bowing*]. Madame!

CARBON [*continuing to present the* CADETS]. Baron de Casterac de Cahuzac, — Vidame de Malgouyre Estressac Lesbas d'Escarabiot, — Chevalier d'Antignac-Juzet, — Baron Hillot de Blagnac-Saléchan de Castel Crabioules . . .

ROXANE. But how many names have you apiece?

BARON HILLOT. Innumerable!

CARBON [*to* ROXANE]. Open your hand with the handkerchief!

ROXANE [*opens her hand; the handkerchief drops*]. Why?

[*The whole company starts forward to pick it up.*]

CARBON [*instantly catching it*]. My company had no flag! Now, my word, it will have the prettiest one in the army!

ROXANE [*smiling*]. It is rather small!

CARBON [*fastening the handkerchief on the staff of his captain's spear*]. But it is lace!

ONE OF THE CADETS [*to the others*]. I could die without a murmur, having looked upon that beautiful face, if I had so much as a walnut inside me! . . .

CARBON [*who has overheard, indignant*]. Shame! . . . to talk of food when an exquisite woman . . .

ROXANE. But the air of the camp is searching, and I myself am hungry: Patties, jellied meat, light wine . . . are what I should like best! Will you kindly bring me some? [*Consternation.*]

ONE OF THE CADETS. Bring you some?

OTHER CADET. And where, great God, shall we get them?

ROXANE [*quietly*]. In my coach.

ALL. What?

ROXANE. But there is much to be done, carving and boning and serving. Look more closely at my coachman, gentlemen, and you will recognize a precious individual: the sauces, if we wish, can be warmed over . . .

THE CADETS [*springing toward the coach*]. It is Ragueneau! [*Cheers.*] Oh! Oh!

ROXANE [*watching them*]. Poor fellows!

CYRANO [*kissing her hand*]. Kind fairy!

RAGUENEAU [*standing upon the box-seat like a vender at a public fair*]. Gentlemen! [*Enthusiasm.*]

THE CADETS. Bravo! Bravo!

RAGUENEAU. How should the Spaniards, when so much beauty passed, suspect the repast? [*Applause.*]

CYRANO [*low to* CHRISTIAN]. Hm! Hm! Christian!

RAGUENEAU. Absorbed in gallantry, no heed took they . . . [*he takes a dish from the box-seat*] . . . of galantine!

[*Applause. The galantine is passed from hand to hand.*]

CYRANO [*low to* CHRISTIAN]. A word with you. . . .

RAGUENEAU. Venus kept their eyes fixed upon herself, while Diana slipped past with the . . . [*he brandishes a joint*] game!

[*Enthusiasm. The joint is seized by twenty hands at once.*]

CYRANO [*low to* CHRISTIAN]. I must speak with you.

ROXANE [*to the* CADETS *who come forward, their arms full of provisions*]. Spread it all upon the ground!

[*Assisted by the two imperturbable footmen who were on the back of the coach, she arranges everything on the grass.*]

ROXANE [*to* CHRISTIAN *whom* CYRANO *is trying to draw aside*]. Make yourself useful, sir!

[CHRISTIAN *comes and helps her.* CYRANO *gives evidence of uneasiness.*]

RAGUENEAU. A truffled peacock!

FIRST CADET [*radiant, comes forward cutting off a large slice of ham*]. Praise the pigs, we shall not go to our last fight with nothing in our b . . . [*correcting himself at sight of* ROXANE] hm . . . stomachs!

RAGUENEAU [*flinging the carriage cushions*]. The cushions are stuffed with snipe!

[*Tumult. The cushions are ripped open. Laughter. Joy.*]

RAGUENEAU [*flinging bottles of red wine*]. Molten ruby! [*Bottles of white wine.*] Fluid topaz!

ROXANE [*throwing a folded tablecloth to* CYRANO]. Unfold the cloth: Hey! . . . be nimble!

RAGUENEAU [*waving one of the coach lanterns*]. Each lantern is a little larder!

CYRANO [*low to* CHRISTIAN, *while together they spread the cloth*]. I must speak with you before you speak with her . . .

RAGUENEAU. The handle of my whip, behold, is a sausage!

ROXANE [*pouring wine, dispensing it*]. Since we are the ones to be killed, *morbleu*, we will not fret ourselves about the rest of the army! Everything for the Gascons! . . . And if De Guiche comes, nobody must invite him! [*Going from one to the other.*] Gently! You have time . . . You must not eat so fast! There, drink. What are you crying about?

FIRST CADET. It is too good!

ROXANE. Hush! White wine or red? — Bread for Monsieur de Carbon! — A knife! — Pass your plate! — You prefer crust? — A little more? — Let me help you. — Champagne? — A wing? —

CYRANO [*following* ROXANE, *his hands full of dishes, helping her*]. I adore her!

ROXANE [*going to* CHRISTIAN]. What will you take?

CHRISTIAN. Nothing!

ROXANE. Oh, but you must take something! This biscuit — in a little Muscatel — just a little?

CHRISTIAN [*trying to keep her from going*]. Tell me what made you come?

ROXANE. I owe myself to those poor fellows . . . Be patient, . . . By and by . . .

LE BRET [*who had gone toward the back to pass a loaf of bread on the end of a pike to the* SENTINEL *upon the earthwork*]. De Guiche!

CYRANO. Presto! Vanish basket, flagon, platter and pan! Hurry! Let us look

as if nothing were! [*To* Ragueneau.] Take a flying leap on to your box! — Is everything hidden?

[*In a wink, all the eatables have been pushed into the tents, or hidden under clothes, cloaks, hats.*]

[*Enter* De Guiche, *hurriedly; he stops short, sniffing the air. Silence.*]

De Guiche. What a good smell!

One of the Cadets [*singing, with effect of mental abstraction*]. To lo lo lo. . . .

De Guiche [*stopping and looking at him closely*]. What is the matter with you — you, there? You are red as a crab.

The Cadet. I? Nothing . . . It is just my blood. . . . We are going to fight: it tells . . .

Other Cadet. Poom . . . poom . . . poom . . .

De Guiche [*turning*]. What is this?

The Cadet [*slightly intoxicated*]. Nothing . . . A song . . . just a little song.

De Guiche. You look in good spirits, my boy!

The Cadet. Danger affects me that way!

De Guiche [*calling* Carbon de Castel-Jaloux *to give an order*]. Captain, I . . . [*He stops at sight of his face.*] *Peste!* You look in good spirits, too.

Carbon (*flushed, holding a bottle behind him; with an evasive gesture*]. Oh! . . .

De Guiche. I had a cannon left over, which I have ordered them to place [*he points in the wing*] there, in that corner, and which your men can use, if necessary . . .

One of the Cadets [*swaying from one foot to the other*]. Charming attention!

Other Cadet [*smiling sugarily*]. Our thanks for your gracious thoughtfulness!

De Guiche. Have they gone mad? . . . [*Drily.*] As you are not accustomed to handling a cannon, look out for its kicking . . .

First Cadet. Ah, pfft! . . .

De Guiche [*going toward him, furious*]. But . . .

The Cadet. A cannon knows better than to kick a Gascon!

De Guiche [*seizing him by the arm and shaking him*]. You are all tipsy: on what?

The Cadet [*magnificently*]. The smell of powder!

De Guiche [*shrugs his shoulders, pushes aside the* Cadet, *and goes rapidly toward* Roxane]. Quick, Madame! what have you condescended to decide?

Roxane. I remain.

De Guiche. Retire, I beseech you!

Roxane. No.

De Guiche. If you are determined, then . . . Let me have a musket!

Carbon. What do you mean?

De Guiche. I, too, will remain.

Cyrano. At last, monsieur, an instance of pure and simple bravery!

First Cadet. Might you be a Gascon, lace collar notwithstanding?

De Guiche. I do not leave a woman in danger.

Second Cadet [*to* First Cadet]. Look here! I think he might be given something to eat!

[*All the food reappears, as if by magic.*]

De Guiche [*his eyes brightening*]. Provisions?

Third Cadet. Under every waistcoat!

De Guiche [*mastering himself, haughtily*]. Do you imagine that I will eat your leavings?

Cyrano [*bowing*]. You are improving!

De Guiche [*proudly, falling at the last of the sentence into a slightly* Gascon *accent*]. I will fight before I eat!

First Cadet [*exultant*]. Fight! Eat! . . . He spoke with an accent!

De Guiche [*laughing*]. I did?

The Cadet. He is one of us!

[*All fall to dancing.*]

Carbon [*who a moment before disappeared behind the earthworks, reappearing at the top*]. I have placed my pikemen. They are a determined troop . . .

[*He points at a line of pikes projecting above the bank.*]

De Guiche [*to* Roxane, *bowing*]. Will you accept my hand and pass them in review?

[*She takes his hand; they go toward the bank. Every one uncovers and follows.*]

Christian [*going to* Cyrano, *quickly*]. Speak! Be quick!

[*As* Roxane *appears at the top of*

the bank, the pikes disappear, lowered in a salute, and a cheer goes up; ROXANE *bows.*]

PIKEMEN [*outside*]. Vivat!

CHRISTIAN. What did you want to tell me?

CYRANO. In case Roxane . . .

CHRISTIAN. Well?

CYRANO. Should speak to you of the letters . . .

CHRISTIAN. Yes, the letters. I know!

CYRANO. Do not commit the blunder of appearing surprised . . .

CHRISTIAN. At what?

CYRANO. I must tell you! . . . It is quite simple, and merely comes into my mind to-day because I see her. You have . . .

CHRISTIAN. Hurry!

CYRANO. You . . . you have written to her oftener than you suppose . . .

CHRISTIAN. Oh, have I?

CYRANO. Yes. It was my business, you see. I had undertaken to interpret your passion, and sometimes I wrote without having told you I should write.

CHRISTIAN. Ah?

CYRANO. It is very simple.

CHRISTIAN. But how did you succeed since we have been so closely surrounded, in . . . ?

CYRANO. Oh, before daybreak I could cross the lines . . .

CHRISTIAN [*folding his arms*]. Ah, that is very simple, too? . . . And how many times a week have I been writing? Twice? Three times? Four? . . .

CYRANO. More.

CHRISTIAN. Every day?

CYRANO. Yes, every day . . . twice.

CHRISTIAN [*violently*]. And you cared so much about it that you were willing to brave death. . . .

CYRANO [*seeing* ROXANE *who returns*]. Be still . . . Not before her!

[*He goes quickly into his tent.* CADETS *come and go at the back.* CARBON *and* DE GUICHE *give orders.*]

ROXANE [*running to* CHRISTIAN]. And now, Christian . . .

CHRISTIAN [*taking her hands*]. And now, you shall tell me why, over these fearful roads, through these ranks of rough soldiery, you risked your dear self to join me?

ROXANE. Because of the letters!

CHRISTIAN. The . . . ? What did you say?

ROXANE. It is through your fault that I have been exposed to such and so many dangers. It is your letters that have gone to my head! Ah, think how many you have written me in a month, each one more beautiful . . .

CHRISTIAN. What? . . . Because of a few little love letters . . .

ROXANE. Say nothing! You cannot understand! Listen: The truth is that I took to idolizing you one evening, when, below my window, in a voice I did not know before, your soul began to reveal itself. . . . Think then what the effect should be of your letters, which have been like your voice heard constantly for one month, your voice of that evening, so tender, caressing . . . You must bear it as you can, I have come to you! Prudent Penelope would not have stayed at home with her eternal tapestry, if Ulysses, her lord, had written as you write . . . but, impulsive as Helen, have tossed aside her yarns, and flown to join him!

CHRISTIAN. But . . .

ROXANE. I read them, I re-read them, in reading I grew faint . . . I became your own indeed! Each fluttering leaf was like a petal of your soul wafted to me . . . In every word of those letters, love is felt as a flame would be felt, — love, compelling, sincere, profound . . .

CHRISTIAN. Ah, sincere, profound? . . . You say that it can be felt, Roxane?

ROXANE. He asks me!

CHRISTIAN. And so you came? . . .

ROXANE. I came — oh Christian, my own, my master! If I were to kneel at your feet you would lift me, I know. It is my soul therefore which kneels, and never can you lift it from that posture! — I came to implore your pardon — as it is fitting, for we are both perhaps about to die! — your pardon for having done you the wrong, at first, in my shallowness, of loving you . . . for mere looking!

CHRISTIAN [*in alarm*]. Ah, Roxane! . . .

ROXANE. Later, dear one, grown less shallow — similar to a bird which flutters before it can fly, — your gallant exterior appealing to me still, but your soul appealing equally, I loved you for both! . . .

CHRISTIAN. And now?

ROXANE. Now at last yourself are vanquished by yourself: I love you for your soul alone . . .

CHRISTIAN [*drawing away*]. Ah, Roxane!

ROXANE. Rejoice! For to be loved for that wherewith we are clothed so fleetingly must put a noble heart to torture. . . . Your dear thought at last casts your dear face in shadow: the harmonious lineaments whereby at first you pleased me, I do not see them, now my eyes are open!

CHRISTIAN. Oh!

ROXANE. You question your own triumph?

CHRISTIAN [*sorrowfully*]. Roxane!

ROXANE. I understand, you cannot conceive of such a love in me?

CHRISTIAN. I do not wish to be loved like that! I wish to be loved quite simply . . .

ROXANE. For that which other women till now have loved in you? Ah, let yourself be loved in a better way.

CHRISTIAN. No . . . I was happier before! . . .

ROXANE. Ah, you do not understand! It is now that I love you most, that I truly love you. It is that which makes you, you — can you not grasp it? — that I worship . . . And did you no longer walk our earth like a young martial Apollo . . .

CHRISTIAN. Say no more!

ROXANE. Still would I love you! . . . Yes, though a blight should have fallen upon your face and form . . .

CHRISTIAN. Do not say it!

ROXANE. But I do say it, . . . I do!

CHRISTIAN. What? If I were ugly, distinctly, offensively?

ROXANE. If you were ugly, dear, I swear it!

CHRISTIAN. God!

ROXANE. And you are glad, profoundly glad?

CHRISTIAN [*in a smothered voice*]. Yes . . .

ROXANE. What is it?

CHRISTIAN [*pushing her gently away*]. Nothing. I have a word or two to say to some one: your leave, for a second . . .

ROXANE. But . . .

CHRISTIAN [*pointing at a group of* CADETS *at the back*]. In my selfish love, I have kept you from those poor brothers. . . . Go, smile on them a little, before they die, dear . . . go!

ROXANE [*moved*]. Dear Christian!

[*She goes toward the* GASCONS *at the back; they respectfully gather around her.*]

CHRISTIAN [*calling toward* CYRANO'S *tent*]. Cyrano!

CYRANO [*appears, armed for battle*]. What is it? . . . How pale you are!

CHRISTIAN. She does not love me any more!

CYRANO. What do you mean?

CHRISTIAN. She loves you.

CYRANO. No!

CHRISTIAN. She only loves my soul!

CYRANO. No!

CHRISTIAN. Yes! Therefore it is you she loves . . . and you love her . . .

CYRANO. I . . .

CHRISTIAN. I know it!

CYRANO. It is true.

CHRISTIAN. To madness!

CYRANO. More.

CHRISTIAN. Tell her then.

CYRANO. No!

CHRISTIAN. Why not?

CYRANO. Look at me!

CHRISTIAN. She would love me grown ugly.

CYRANO. She told you so?

CHRISTIAN. With the utmost frankness!

CYRANO. Ah! I am glad she should have told you that! But, believe me, believe me, place no faith in such a mad asseveration! Dear God, I am glad such a thought should have come to her, and that she should have spoken it, — but believe me, do not take her at her word: Never cease to be the handsome fellow you are. . . . She would not forgive me!

CHRISTIAN. That is what I wish to discover.

CYRANO. No! no!

CHRISTIAN. Let her choose between us! You shall tell her everything.

CYRANO. No . . . No . . . I refuse the ordeal!

CHRISTIAN. Shall I stand in the way of your happiness because my outside is not so much amiss?

CYRANO. And I? shall I destroy yours, because, thanks to the hazard that sets us upon earth, I have the gift of expressing . . . what you perhaps feel?

CHRISTIAN. You shall tell her everything!

CYRANO. He persists in tempting me . . . It is a mistake . . . and cruel!

CHRISTIAN. I am weary of carrying about, in my own self, a rival!

CYRANO. Christian!

CHRISTIAN. Our marriage . . . contracted without witnesses . . . can be annulled . . . if we survive!

CYRANO. He persists! . . .

CHRISTIAN. Yes. I will be loved for my sole self, or not at all! — I am going to see what they are about. Look! I will walk to the end of the line and back . . . Tell her, and let her pronounce between us.

CYRANO. She will pronounce for you.

CHRISTIAN. I can but hope she will! [*calling*] Roxane!

CYRANO. No! No!

ROXANE [*coming forward*]. What is it?

CHRISTIAN. Cyrano has something to tell you . . . something important!

[ROXANE *goes hurriedly to* CYRANO. *Exit* CHRISTIAN.]

ROXANE. Something important?

CYRANO [*distracted*]. He is gone! . . . [*To* ROXANE.] Nothing whatever! He attaches — but you must know him of old! — he attaches importance to trifles . . .

ROXANE [*quickly*]. He did not believe what I told him a moment ago? . . . I saw that he did not believe . . .

CYRANO [*taking her hand*]. But did you in very truth tell him the truth?

ROXANE. Yes. Yes. I should love him even . . . [*She hesitates a second.*]

CYRANO [*smiling sadly*]. You do not like to say it before me?

ROXANE. But . . .

CYRANO. I shall not mind! . . . Even if he were ugly?

ROXANE. Yes . . . Ugly. [*Musket shots outside.*] They are firing!

CYRANO [*ardently*]. Dreadfully ugly?

ROXANE. Dreadfully.

CYRANO. Disfigured?

ROXANE. Disfigured!

CYRANO. Grotesque?

ROXANE. Nothing could make him grotesque . . . to me.

CYRANO. You would love him still?

ROXANE. I believe that I should love him more . . . if that were possible!

CYRANO [*losing his head, aside*]. My God, perhaps she means it . . . perhaps it is true . . . and that way is happiness! [*To* ROXANE.] I . . . Roxane . . . listen!

LE BRET [*comes in hurriedly; calls softly*]. Cyrano!

CYRANO [*turning*]. *Hein?*

LE BRET. Hush!

[*He whispers a few words to* CYRANO.]

CYRANO [*letting* ROXANE'S *hand drop, with a cry*]. Ah! . . .

ROXANE. What ails you?

CYRANO [*to himself, in consternation*]. It is finished! [*Musket reports.*]

ROXANE. What is it? What is happening? Who is firing?

[*She goes to the back to look off.*]

CYRANO. It is finished. . . . My lips are sealed forevermore!

[CADETS *come in, attempting to conceal something they carry among them; they surround it, preventing* ROXANE'S *seeing it.*]

ROXANE. What has happened?

CYRANO [*quickly stopping her as she starts toward them*]. Nothing!

ROXANE. These men? . . .

CYRANO [*drawing her away*]. Pay no attention to them!

ROXANE. But what were you about to say to me before?

CYRANO. What was I about to say? . . . Oh, nothing! . . . Nothing whatever, I assure you. [*Solemnly.*] I swear that Christian's spirit, that his soul, were . . . [*in terror, correcting himself*] are the greatest that . . .

ROXANE. Were? . . . [*With a great cry.*] Ah! . . .

[*Runs to the group of* CADETS, *and thrusts them aside.*]

CYRANO. It is finished!

ROXANE [*seeing* CHRISTIAN *stretched out in his cloak*]. Christian!

LE BRET [*to* CYRANO]. At the enemy's first shot!

[ROXANE *throws herself on* CHRISTIAN'S *body. Musket reports. Clashing of swords. Tramping. Drums.*]

CARBON [*sword in hand*]. The attack! To your muskets!

[*Followed by the* CADETS *he goes to the further side of the earthworks.*]

ROXANE. Christian!

CARBON'S VOICE [*beyond the earthworks*]. Make haste!

ROXANE. Christian!

CARBON. Fall into line!

ROXANE. Christian!

CARBON. Measure . . . match!

[RAGUENEAU *has come running in with water in a steel cap.*]

CHRISTIAN [*in a dying voice*]. Roxane!

CYRANO [*quick, low in* CHRISTIAN'S *ear, while* ROXANE, *distracted, dips into the water a fragment of linen torn from her breast to bind his wound*]. I have told her everything! . . . You are still the one she loves! [CHRISTIAN *closes his eyes.*]

ROXANE. What, dear love?

CARBON. Muzzle . . . high!

ROXANE [*to* CYRANO]. He is not dead? . . .

CARBON. Open charge . . . with teeth!

ROXANE. I feel his cheek grow cold against my own!

CARBON. Take aim!

ROXANE. A letter on his breast. . . . [*She opens it.*] To me!

CYRANO [*aside*]. My letter!

CARBON. Fire!

[*Musket shots. Cries. Roar of battle.*]

CYRANO [*trying to free his hand which* ROXANE *clasps kneeling*]. But, Roxane, they are fighting.

ROXANE [*clinging*]. No! . . . Stay with me a little! . . . He is dead. You are the only one that truly knew him. . . . [*She cries subduedly.*] Was he not an exquisite being, . . . an exceptional, marvellous being? . . .

CYRANO [*standing bareheaded*]. Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE. A poet without his peer, . . . one verily to reverence?

CYRANO. Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE. A sublime spirit?

CYRANO. Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE. A profound heart, such as the profane could never have understood . . . a soul as noble as it was charming? . . .

CYRANO [*firmly*]. Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE [*throwing herself on* CHRISTIAN'S *body*]. And he is dead!

CYRANO [*aside, drawing his sword*]. And I have now only to die, since, without knowing it, she mourns my death in his!

[*Trumpets in the distance.*]

DE GUICHE [*reappears on the top of the bank, bareheaded, his forehead bloody; in a thundering voice*]. The signal they promised! The flourish of trumpets! . . . The French are entering the camp with supplies! . . . Stand fast a little longer!

ROXANE. Upon his letter . . . blood, . . . tears!

A VOICE [*outside, shouting*]. Surrender!

VOICES OF THE CADETS. No!

RAGUENEAU [*who from the top of the coach is watching the battle beyond the bank*]. The conflict rages hotter! . . .

CYRANO [*to* DE GUICHE *pointing at* ROXANE]. Take her away! . . . I am going to charge.

ROXANE [*kissing the letter, in a dying voice*]. His blood! . . . his tears!

RAGUENEAU [*leaping from the coach and running to* ROXANE]. She is fainting!

DE GUICHE [*at the top of the bank, to the* CADETS, *madly*]. Stand fast!

VOICE [*outside*]. Surrender!

VOICES OF THE CADETS. No!

CYRANO [*to* DE GUICHE]. Your courage none will question . . . [*Pointing at* ROXANE.] Fly for the sake of saving her!

DE GUICHE [*runs to* ROXANE *and lifts her in his arms*]. So be it! But we shall win the day if you can hold out a little longer . . .

CYRANO. We can. [*To* ROXANE, *whom* DE GUICHE, *helped by* RAGUENEAU, *is carrying off insensible.*] Good-bye, Roxane!

[*Tumult. Cries.* CADETS *reappear, wounded, and fall upon the stage.* CYRANO *dashing forward to join the combatants is stopped on the crest of the bank by* CARBON *covered with blood.*]

CARBON. We are losing ground . . . I have got two halberd wounds . . .

CYRANO [*yelling to the* GASCONS]. Steadfast! . . . Never give them an inch! . . . Brave boys! [*To* CARBON.] Fear nothing! I have various deaths to avenge: Christian's and all my hopes'! [*They come down.* CYRANO *brandishes the spear at the head of which* ROXANE'S *handkerchief is fastened.*] Float free, little cobweb flag, embroidered with her initials! [*He drives the spear-staff into the earth; shouts to the* CADETS.] Fall on them, boys! . . . Crush them! [*To the fifer.*] Fifer, play!

[*The fifer plays. Some of the wounded get to their feet again. Some of the* CADETS, *coming down the bank, group themselves around* CYRANO *and the little flag. The coach, filled and covered with men, bristles with muskets and becomes a redoubt.*]

ONE OF THE CADETS [*appears upon the top of the bank backing while he fights; he cries*]. They are coming up the slope!

[*Falls dead.*]

CYRANO. We will welcome them!

[*Above the bank suddenly rises a formidable array of enemies. The great banners of the Imperial Army appear.*]

CYRANO. Fire! [*General discharge.*]

CRY [*among the hostile ranks*]. Fire!

[*Shots returned.* CADETS *drop on every side.*]

A SPANISH OFFICER [*taking off his hat*]. What are these men, so determined all to be killed?

CYRANO [*declaiming, as he stands in the midst of flying bullets*].

They are the Gascony Cadets
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux;
Famed fighters, liars, desperates . . .

[*He leaps forward, followed by a handful of survivors.*]

They are the Gascony Cadets! . . .

[*The rest is lost in the confusion of battle.*]

CURTAIN

ACT FIFTH

CYRANO'S GAZETTE

Fifteen years later, 1655. *The park belonging to the convent of the Sisters of the Cross, in Paris.*

Superb shade-trees. At the left, the house; several doors opening on to broad terrace with steps. In the centre of the stage, huge trees standing alone in a clear oval space. At the right, first wing, a semicircular stone seat, surrounded by large box-trees.

All along the back of the stage, an avenue of chestnut-trees, which leads, at the right, fourth wing, to the door of a chapel seen through trees. Through the double row of trees overarching the avenue are seen lawns, other avenues, clumps of trees, the further recesses of the park, the sky.

The chapel opens by a small side-door into a colonnade, overrun by a scarlet creeper; the colonnade comes forward and is lost to sight behind the box-trees at the right.

It is Autumn. The leaves are turning, above the still fresh grass. Dark patches of evergreens, box and yew. Under each tree a mat of yellow leaves. Fallen leaves litter the whole stage, crackle underfoot, lie thick on the terrace and the seats.

Between the seat at the right and the tree in the centre, a large embroidery frame, in front of which a small chair. Baskets full of wools, in skeins and balls. On the frame, a piece of tapestry, partly done.

At the rise of the curtain, nuns come and go in the park; a few are seated on the stone seat around an older nun; leaves are falling.

SISTER MARTHA [*to* MOTHER MARGARET]. Sister Claire, after putting on her cap went back to the mirror, to see herself again.

MOTHER MARGARET [*to* SISTER CLAIRE]. It was unbecoming, my child.

SISTER CLAIRE. But Sister Martha, today, after finishing her portion, went back to the tart for a plum. I saw her!

MOTHER MARGARET [*to* SISTER MARTHA]. My child, it was ill done.

SISTER CLAIRE. I merely glanced! . . .

SISTER MARTHA. The plum was about so big! . . .

MOTHER MARGARET. This evening, when Monsieur Cyrano comes, I will tell him.

SISTER CLAIRE [*alarmed*]. No! He will laugh at us!

SISTER MARTHA. He will say that nuns are very vain!

SISTER CLAIRE. And very greedy!

MOTHER MARGARET. And really very good.

SISTER CLAIRE. Mother Margaret, is it not true that he has come here every Saturday in the last ten years?

MOTHER MARGARET. Longer! Ever since his cousin brought among our linen coifs her coif of crape, the worldly symbol of her mourning, which settled like a sable bird amidst our flock of white some fourteen years ago.

SISTER MARTHA. He alone, since she took her abode in our cloister, has art to dispel her never-lessening sorrow.

ALL THE NUNS. He is so droll! — It is merry when he comes! — He teases us! — He is delightful! — We are greatly attached to him! — We are making Angelica paste to offer him!

SISTER MARTHA. He is not, however, a very good Catholic!

SISTER CLAIRE. We will convert him.

THE NUNS. We will! We will!

MOTHER MARGARET. I forbid your renewing that attempt, my children. Do not trouble him: he might not come so often!

SISTER MARTHA. But . . . God!

MOTHER MARGARET. Set your hearts at rest: God must know him of old!

SISTER MARTHA. But every Saturday, when he comes, he says to me as soon as he sees me, "Sister, I ate meat, yesterday!"

MOTHER MARGARET. Ah, that is what he says? . . . Well, when he last said it, he had eaten nothing for two days.

SISTER MARTHA. Mother!

MOTHER MARGARET. He is poor.

SISTER MARTHA. Who told you?

MOTHER MARGARET. Monsieur Le Bret.

SISTER MARTHA. Does no one offer him assistance?

MOTHER MARGARET. No, he would take offence.

[*In one of the avenues at the back, appears* ROXANE, *in black, wearing a widow's coif and long mourning veil;* DE GUICHE, *markedly older, magnificently dressed, walks beside her. They go very slowly.* MOTHER MARGARET *gets up.*]

MOTHER MARGARET. Come, we must go within. Madame Magdeleine is walking in the park with a visitor.

SISTER MARTHA [*low to* SISTER CLAIRE]. Is not that the Marshal-duke de Grammont?

SISTER CLAIRE [*looking*]. I think it is!

SISTER MARTHA. He has not been to see her in many months!

THE NUNS. He is much engaged! — The Court! — The Camp! —

SISTER CLAIRE. Cares of this world!

[*Exeunt.* DE GUICHE *and* ROXANE *come forward silently, and stop near the embroidery frame. A pause.*]

DE GUICHE. And so you live here, uselessly fair, always in mourning?

ROXANE. Always.

DE GUICHE. As faithful as of old?

ROXANE. As faithful.

DE GUICHE [*after a time*]. Have you forgiven me?

ROXANE. Since I am here.

[*Other silence.*]

DE GUICHE. And he was really such a rare being?

ROXANE. To understand, one must have known him!

DE GUICHE. Ah, one must have known him! . . . Perhaps I did not know him well enough. And his last letter, still and always, against your heart?

ROXANE. I wear it on this velvet, as a more holy scapular.

DE GUICHE. Even dead, you love him?

ROXANE. It seems to me sometimes he is but half dead, that our hearts have not been severed, that his love still wraps me round, no less than ever living!

DE GUICHE [*after another silence*]. Does Cyrano come here to see you?

ROXANE. Yes, often. That faithful friend fulfils by me the office of gazette. His visits are regular. He comes: when the weather is fine, his armchair is brought out under the trees. I wait for him here with my work; the hour strikes; on the last stroke, I hear — I do not even turn to see who comes! — his cane upon the steps; he takes his seat; he rallies me upon my never-ending tapestry; he tells off the events of the week, and . . . [LE BRET *appears on the steps.*] Ah, Le Bret! [LE BRET *comes down the steps.*] How does your friend?

LE BRET. Ill.

THE DUKE. Oh!

ROXANE. He exaggerates! . . .

LE BRET. All is come to pass as I foretold: neglect! poverty! his writings ever breeding him new enemies! Fraud he attacks in every embodiment: usurpers, pious pretenders, plagiarists, asses in lions' skins . . . all! He attacks all!

ROXANE. No one, however, but stands in profound respect of his sword. They will never succeed in silencing him.

DE GUICHE [*shaking his head*]. Who knows?

LE BRET. What I fear is not the aggression of man; what I fear is loneliness and want and winter creeping upon him like stealthy wolves in his miserable attic; they are the insidious foes that will have him by the throat at last! . . . Every day he tightens his belt by an eyelet; his poor great nose is pinched, and turned the sallow of old ivory; the worn black serge you see him in is the only coat he has!

DE GUICHE. Ah, there is one who did not succeed! . . . Nevertheless, do not pity him too much.

LE BRET [*with a bitter smile*]. Marshal! . . .

DE GUICHE. Do not pity him too much: he signed no bonds with the world; he has lived free in his thought as in his actions.

LE BRET [*as above*]. Duke . . .

DE GUICHE [*haughtily*]. I know, yes: I have everything, he has nothing. . . . But I should like to shake hands with him. [*Bowing to* ROXANE.] Good-bye.

ROXANE. I will go with you to the door.

[DE GUICHE *bows to* LE BRET *and goes with* ROXANE *toward the terrace steps.*]

DE GUICHE [*stopping, while she goes up the steps*]. Yes, sometimes I envy him. You see, when a man has succeeded too well in life, he is not unlikely to feel — dear me! without having committed any very serious wrong! — a multitudinous disgust of himself, the sum of which does not constitute a real remorse, but an obscure uneasiness; and a ducal mantle, while it sweeps up the stairs of greatness, may trail in its furry lining a rustling of sere illusions and regrets, as, when you slowly climb toward those doors, your black gown trails the withered leaves.

ROXANE [*ironical*]. Are you not unusually pensive? . . .

DE GUICHE. Ah, yes! [*As he is about to leave, abruptly.*] Monsieur Le Bret! [*To* ROXANE.] Will you allow me? A word. [*He goes to* LE BRET, *and lowering his voice.*] It is true that no one will dare overtly to attack your friend, but many have him in particular disrelish; and some one was saying to me yesterday, at the Queen's, "It seems not unlikely that this Cyrano will meet with an accident."

LE BRET. Ah? . . .

DE GUICHE. Yes. Let him keep indoors. Let him be cautious.

LE BRET [*lifting his arms toward Heaven*]. Cautious! . . . He is coming here. I will warn him. Warn him! . . . Yes, but . . .

ROXANE [*who has been standing at the head of the steps, to a nun who comes toward her*]. What is it?

THE NUN. Ragueneau begs to see you, Madame.

ROXANE. Let him come in. [*To* DE GUICHE *and* LE BRET.] He comes to plead distress. Having determined one day to be an author, he became in turn precentor . . .

LE BRET. Bath-house keeper . . .

ROXANE. Actor . . .

LE BRET. Beadle . . .

ROXANE. Barber . . .

LE BRET. Arch-lute teacher . . .

ROXANE. I wonder what he is now!

RAGUENEAU [*entering precipitately*]. Ah, madame! [*He sees* LE BRET.] Monsieur!

ROXANE [*smiling*]. Begin telling your misfortunes to Le Bret. I am coming back.

RAGUENEAU. But, madame . . .

[ROXANE *leaves without listening, with the* DUKE. RAGUENEAU *goes to* LE BRET.]

RAGUENEAU. It is better so. Since you are here, I had liefer not tell her! Less than half an hour ago, I was going to see your friend. I was not thirty feet from his door, when I saw him come out. I hurried to catch up with him. He was about to turn the corner. I started to run, when from a window below which he was passing — was it pure mischance? It may have been! — a lackey drops a block of wood . . .

LE BRET. Ah, the cowards! . . . Cyrano!

RAGUENEAU. I reach the spot, and find him . . .

LE BRET. Horrible!

RAGUENEAU. Our friend, monsieur, our poet, stretched upon the ground, with a great hole in his head!

LE BRET. He is dead?

RAGUENEAU. No, but . . . God have mercy! I carried him to his lodging . . . Ah, his lodging! You should see that lodging of his!

LE BRET. Is he in pain?

RAGUENEAU. No, monsieur, he is unconscious.

LE BRET. Has a doctor seen him?

RAGUENEAU. One came . . . out of good nature.

LE BRET. My poor, poor Cyrano! . . . We must not tell Roxane outright. And the doctor? . . .

RAGUENEAU. He talked . . . I hardly grasped . . . of fever . . . cerebral inflammation! Ah, if you should see him, with his head done up in cloths! . . . Let us hurry . . . No one is there to tend him . . . And he might die if he attempted to get up!

LE BRET [*dragging* RAGUENEAU *off at the right*]. This way. Come, it is shorter through the chapel.

ROXANE [*appearing at the head of the steps, catching sight of* LE BRET *hurrying off through the colonnade which leads to the chapel side-door*]. Monsieur Le Bret! [LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU *make their escape without answering.*] Le Bret not turning back when he is called? . . . Poor Ragueneau must be in some new trouble! [*She comes down the steps.*] How beautiful . . . how beautiful, this golden-hazy waning day of September at its wane! My sorrowful mood, which the exuberant gladness of April offends, Autumn, the dreamy and subdued, lures on to smile . . . [*She sits down at her embroidery frame. Two* NUNS *come from the house bringing a large armchair which they place under the tree.*] Ah, here comes the classic armchair in which my old friend always sits!

SISTER MARTHA. The best in the convent parlor!

ROXANE. I thank you, sister. [*The nuns withdraw.*] He will be here in a moment. [*She adjusts the embroidery frame before her.*] There! The clock is striking . . . My wools! . . . The clock has struck? . . . I wonder at this! . . . Is it possible that for the first time he is late? . . . It must be that the sister who keeps the door . . . my thimble? ah, here it is! . . . is detaining him to exhort him to repentance . . . [*A pause.*] She exhorts him at some length! . . . He cannot be much longer . . . A withered leaf! [*She brushes away the dead leaf which has dropped on the embroidery.*] Surely nothing could keep . . . My scissors? . . . in my workbag! . . . could keep him from coming!

A NUN [*appearing at the head of the steps*]. Monsieur de Bergerac!

ROXANE [*without turning round*]. What was I saying? . . . [*She begins to embroider.* CYRANO *appears, exceedingly pale, his hat drawn down over his eyes. The* NUN *who has shown him into the garden, withdraws. He comes down the steps very slowly, with evident difficulty to keep on his feet, leaning heavily on his cane.* ROXANE *proceeds with her sewing.*] Ah, these dull soft shades! . . . How shall I match them? [*To* CYRANO, *in*

a tone of friendly chiding.] After fourteen years, for the first time you are late!

CYRANO [*who has reached the armchair and seated himself, in a jolly voice which contrasts with his face*]. Yes, it seems incredible! I am savage at it. I was detained, spite of all I could do! . . .

ROXANE. By? . . .

CYRANO. A somewhat inopportune call.

ROXANE [*absent-minded, sewing*]. Ah, yes . . . some troublesome fellow!

CYRANO. Cousin, it was a troublesome Madam.

ROXANE. You excused yourself?

CYRANO. Yes. I said, "Your pardon, but this is Saturday, on which day I am due in certain dwelling. On no account do I ever fail. Come back in an hour!"

ROXANE [*lightly*]. Well, she will have to wait some time to see you. I shall not let you go before evening.

CYRANO. Perhaps . . . I shall have to go a little earlier.

[*He closes his eyes and is silent a moment.* SISTER MARTHA *is seen crossing the park from the chapel to the terrace.* ROXANE *sees her and beckons to her by a slight motion of her head.*]

ROXANE [*to* CYRANO]. Are you not going to tease Sister Martha to-day?

CYRANO [*quickly, opening his eyes*]. I am indeed! [*In a comically gruff voice.*] Sister Martha, come nearer! [*The* NUN *demurely comes toward him.*] Ha! ha! ha! Beautiful eyes, ever studying the ground!

SISTER MARTHA [*lifting her eyes and smiling*]. But . . . [*She sees his face and makes a gesture of surprise.*] Oh!

CYRANO [*low, pointing at* ROXANE]. Hush! . . . It is nothing! [*In a swaggering voice, aloud.*] Yesterday, I ate meat!

SISTER MARTHA. I am sure you did! [*Aside.*] That is why he is so pale! [*Quickly, low.*] Come to the refectory presently. I shall have ready for you there a good bowl of broth . . . You will come!

CYRANO. Yes, yes, yes.

SISTER MARTHA. Ah, you are more reasonable to-day!

ROXANE [*hearing them whisper*]. She is trying to convert you?

SISTER MARTHA. Indeed I am not!

CYRANO. It is true, you, usually almost discursive in the holy cause, are reading me no sermon! You amaze me! [*With comical fury.*] I will amaze you, too! Listen, you are authorized . . . [*With the air of casting about in his mind, and finding the jest he wants.*] Ah, now I shall amaze you! to . . . pray for me, this evening . . . in the chapel.

ROXANE. Oh! oh!

CYRANO [*laughing*]. Sister Martha . . . lost in amazement!

SISTER MARTHA [*gently*]. I did not wait for your authorization. [*She goes in.*]

CYRANO [*turning to* ROXANE, *who is bending over her embroidery*]. The devil, tapestry . . . the devil, if I hope to live to see the end of you!

ROXANE I was waiting for that jest.

[*A slight gust of wind makes the leaves fall.*]

CYRANO. The leaves!

ROXANE [*looking up from her work and gazing off toward the avenues*]. They are the russet gold of a Venetian beauty's hair . . . Watch them fall!

CYRANO. How consummately they do it! In that brief fluttering from bough to ground, how they contrive still to put beauty! And though foredoomed to moulder upon the earth that draws them, they wish their fall invested with the grace of a free bird's flight!

ROXANE. Serious, you?

CYRANO [*remembering himself*]. Not at all, Roxane!

ROXANE. Come, never mind the falling leaves! Tell me the news, instead . . . Where is my budget?

CYRANO. Here it is!

ROXANE. Ah!

CYRANO [*growing paler and paler, and struggling with pain*]. Saturday, the nineteenth: The king having filled his dish eight times with Cette preserves, and emptied it, was taken with a fever; his distemper, for high treason, was condemned to be let blood, and now the royal pulse is rid of febriculosity! On Sunday: at the Queen's great ball, were burned seven hundred and sixty-three wax candles;

our troops, it is said, defeated Austrian John; four sorcerers were hanged; Madame Athis's little dog had a distressing turn, the case called for a . . .

ROXANE. Monsieur de Bergerac, leave out the little dog!

CYRANO. Monday, . . . nothing, or next to it: Lygdamire took a fresh lover.

ROXANE. Oh!

CYRANO [*over whose face is coming a change more and more marked*]. Tuesday: the whole Court assembled at Fontainebleau. Wednesday, the fair Monglat said to Count Fiesco "No!" Thursday, Mancini, Queen of France, . . . or little less. Twenty-fifth, the fair Monglat said to Count Fiesco "Yes!" And Saturday, the twenty-sixth . . .

[*He closes his eyes. His head drops on his breast. Silence.*]

ROXANE [*surprised at hearing nothing further, turns, looks at him and starts to her feet in alarm*]. Has he fainted? [*She runs to him, calling.*] Cyrano!

CYRANO [*opening his eyes, in a faint voice*]. What is it? . . . What is the matter! [*He sees* ROXANE *bending over him, hurriedly readjusts his hat, pulling it more closely over his head, and shrinks back in his armchair in terror.*] No! no! I assure you, it is nothing! . . . Do not mind me!

ROXANE. But surely . . .

CYRANO. It is merely the wound I received at Arras . . . Sometimes . . . you know . . even now . . .

ROXANE. Poor friend!

CYRANO. But it is nothing . . . It will pass . . . [*He smiles with effort.*] It has passed.

ROXANE. Each one of us has his wound: I too have mine. It is here, never to heal, that ancient wound . . . [*She places her hand on her breast.*] It is here, beneath the yellowing letter on which are still faintly visible tear-drops and drops of blood!

[*The light is beginning to grow less.*]

CYRANO. His letter? . . . Did you not once say that some day . . . you might show it to me?

ROXANE. Ah! . . . Do you wish? . . . His letter?

CYRANO. Yes . . . to-day . . . I wish to . . .

ROXANE [*handing him the little bag from her neck*]. Here!

CYRANO. I may open it?

ROXANE. Open it . . . read!

[*She goes back to her embroidery frame, folds it up, orders her wools.*]

CYRANO. "Good-bye, Roxane! I am going to die!"

ROXANE [*stopping in astonishment*]. You are reading it aloud?

CYRANO [*reading*]. "It is fated to come this evening, beloved, I believe! My soul is heavy, oppressed with love it had not time to utter . . . and now Time is at end! Never again, never again shall my worshipping eyes . . . "

ROXANE. How strangely you read his letter!

CYRANO [*continuing*]. " . . . whose passionate revel it was, kiss in its fleeting grace your every gesture. One, usual to you, of tucking back a little curl, comes to my mind . . . and I cannot refrain from crying out . . ."

ROXANE. How strangely you read his letter! . . .

[*The darkness gradually increases.*]

CYRANO. "and I cry out: Good-bye!"

ROXANE. You read it . . .

CYRANO. "my dearest, my darling, . . . my treasure . . . "

ROXANE. . . . in a voice . . .

CYRANO. ". . . my love! . . ."

ROXANE. . . . in a voice . . . a voice which I am not hearing for the first time!

[ROXANE *comes quietly nearer to him, without his seeing it; she steps behind his armchair, bends noiselessly over his shoulder, looks at the letter. The darkness deepens.*]

CYRANO. " . . . My heart never desisted for a second from your side . . . and I am and shall be in the world that has no end, the one who loved you without measure, the one . . . "

ROXANE [*laying her hand on his shoulder*]. How can you go on reading? It is dark. [CYRANO *starts, and turns round; sees her close to him, makes a gesture of dismay and hangs his head. Then, in the darkness which*

has completely closed round them, she says slowly, clasping her hands.] And he, for fourteen years, has played the part of the comical old friend who came to cheer me!

CYRANO. Roxane!

ROXANE. So it was you.

CYRANO. No, no, Roxane!

ROXANE. I ought to have divined it, if only by the way in which he speaks my name!

CYRANO. No, it was not I!

ROXANE. So it was you!

CYRANO. I swear to you . . .

ROXANE. Ah, I detect at last the whole generous imposture: The letters . . . were yours!

CYRANO. No!

ROXANE. The tender fancy, the dear folly, . . . yours!

CYRANO. No!

ROXANE. The voice in the night, was yours!

CYRANO. I swear to you that it was not!

ROXANE. The soul . . . was yours!

CYRANO. I did not love you, no!

ROXANE. And you loved me!

CYRANO. Not I . . . it was the other!

ROXANE. You loved me!

CYRANO. No!

ROXANE. Already your denial comes more faintly!

CYRANO. No, no, my darling love, I did not love you!

ROXANE. Ah, how many things within the hour have died . . . how many have been born! Why, why have . . . been silent these long years, when on this letter, in which he had no part, the tears were yours?

CYRANO [*handing her the letter*]. Because . . . the blood was his.

ROXANE. Then why let the sublime bond of this silence be loosed to-day?

CYRANO. Why?

[LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU *enter running.*]

LE BRET. Madness! Monstrous madness! . . . Ah, I was sure of it! There he is!

CYRANO [*smiling and straightening himself*]. *Tiens!* Where else?

LE BRET. Madame, he is likely to have got his death by getting out of bed!

ROXANE. Merciful God! A moment ago, then . . . that faintness . . . that . . . ?

CYRANO. It is true. I had not finished telling you the news. And on Saturday, the twenty-sixth, an hour after sundown, Monsieur de Bergerac died of murder done upon him.

[*He takes off his hat; his head is seen wrapped in bandages.*]

ROXANE. What is he saying? . . . Cyrano? . . . Those bandages about his head? . . . Ah, what have they done to you? . . . Why? . . .

CYRANO. "Happy who falls, cut off by a hero, with an honest sword through his heart!" I am quoting from myself! . . . Fate will have his laugh at us! . . . Here am I killed, in a trap, from behind, by a lackey, with a log! Nothing could be completer! In my whole life I shall have not had anything I wanted . . . not even a decent death!

RAGUENEAU. Ah, monsieur! . . .

CYRANO. Ragueneau, do not sob like that! [*Holding out his hand to him.*] And what is the news with you, these latter days, fellow-poet?

RAGUENEAU [*through his tears*]. I am candle-snuffer at Molière's theatre.

CYRANO. Molière!

RAGUENEAU. But I intend to leave no later than to-morrow. Yes, I am indignant! Yesterday, they were giving Scapin, and I saw that he has appropriated a scene of yours.

LE BRET. A whole scene?

RAGUENEAU. Yes, monsieur. The one in which occurs the famous "What the devil was he doing in . . . "

LE BRET. Molière has taken that from you!

CYRANO. Hush! hush! He did well to take it! [*To* RAGUENEAU.] The scene was very effective, was it not?

RAGUENEAU. Ah, monsieur, the public laughed . . . laughed!

CYRANO. Yes, to the end, I shall have been the one who prompted . . . and was forgotten! [*To* ROXANE.] Do you remember that evening on which Christian spoke

to you from below the balcony? There was the epitome of my life: while I have stood below in darkness, others have climbed to gather the kiss and glory! It is well done, and on the brink of my grave I approve it: Molière has genius . . . Christian was a fine fellow! [*At this moment, the chapel bell having rung, the* NUNS *are seen passing at the back, along the avenue, on their way to service.*] Let them hasten to their prayers . . . the bell is summoning them . . .

ROXANE [*rising and calling*]. Sister! Sister!

CYRANO [*holding her back*]. No! No! do not leave me to fetch anybody! When you came back I might not be here to rejoice . . . [*The* NUNS *have gone into the chapel; the organ is heard.*] I longed for a little music . . . it comes in time!

ROXANE. I love you . . . you shall live!

CYRANO. No! for it is only in the fairy-tale that the shy and awkward prince when he hears the beloved say "I love you!" feels his ungainliness melt and drop from him in the sunshine of those words! . . . But you would always know full well, dear Heart, that there had taken place in your poor slave no beautifying change!

ROXANE. I have hurt you . . . I have wrecked your life, I! . . . I!

CYRANO. You? . . . The reverse! Woman's sweetness I had never known. My mother . . . thought me unflattering. I had no sister. Later, I shunned Love's cross-road in fear of mocking eyes. To you I owe having had, at least, among the gentle and fair, a friend. Thanks to you there has passed across my life the rustle of a woman's gown.

LE BRET [*calling his attention to the moonlight peering through the branches*]. Your other friend, among the gentle and fair, is there . . . she comes to see you!

CYRANO [*smiling to the moon*]. I see her!

ROXANE. I never loved but one . . . and twice I lose him!

CYRANO. Le Bret, I shall ascend into the opalescent moon, without need this time of a flying-machine!

ROXANE. What are you saying?

CYRANO. Yes, it is there, you may be sure, I shall be sent for my Paradise. More than one soul of those I have loved must be apportioned there . . . There I shall find Socrates and Galileo!

LE BRET [*in revolt*]. No! No! It is too senseless, too cruel, too unfair! So true a poet! So great a heart! To die . . . like this! To die! . . .

CYRANO. As ever . . . Le Bret is grumbling!

LE BRET [*bursting into tears*]. My friend! My friend!

CYRANO [*lifting himself, his eyes wild*]. They are the Gascony Cadets! . . . Man in the gross . . . Eh, yes! . . . the weakness of the weakest point . . .

LE BRET. Learned . . . even in his delirium! . . .

CYRANO. Copernicus said . . .

ROXANE. Oh!

CYRANO. But what the devil was he doing . . . and what the devil was he doing in that galley?

Philosopher and physicist,
Musician, rhymester, duellist,
Explorer of the upper blue,
Retorter apt with point and point,
Lover as well, — not for his peace!
Here lies Hercule Savinien
De Cyrano de Bergerac,
Who was everything . . . but of account!

But, your pardons, I must go . . . I wish to keep no one waiting . . . See, a moonbeam, come to take me home! [*He has dropped in his chair;* ROXANE'S *weeping calls him back to reality; he looks at her and gently stroking her mourning veil.*] I do not wish . . . indeed, I do not wish . . . that you should sorrow less for Christian, the comely and the kind! Only I wish that when the everlasting cold shall have seized upon my fibres, this funereal veil should have a twofold meaning, and the mourning you wear for him be worn for me too . . . a little!

ROXANE. I promise . . .

CYRANO [*seized with a great shivering, starts to his feet*]. Not there! No! Not in an elbow-chair! [*All draw nearer to help him.*] Let no one stay me! No one!

[*He goes and stands against the tree.*] Nothing but this tree! [*Silence.*] She comes, Mors, the indiscriminate Madam! . . . Already I am booted with marble . . . gauntleted with lead! [*He stiffens himself.*] Ah, since she is on her way, I will await her standing . . . [*He draws his sword.*] Sword in hand!

LE BRET. Cyrano!

ROXANE [*swooning*]. Cyrano!

[*All start back, terrified.*]

CYRANO. I believe she is looking at me . . . that she dares to look at my nose, the bony baggage who has none! [*He raises his sword.*] What are you saying? That it is no use? . . . I know it! But one does not fight because there is hope of winning! No! . . . no! . . . it is much finer to fight when it is no use! . . . What are all those? You are a thousand strong? . . . Ah, I know you now . . . all my ancient enemies! . . . Hypocrisy? . . . [*He beats with his sword, in the vacancy.*] Take this! and this! Ha! Ha! Compromises? . . . and Prejudices? and dastardly Expedients? [*He strikes.*] That I should come to terms, I? . . . Never! Never! . . . Ah, you are there too, you, bloated and pompous Silliness! I know full well that you will lay me low at last . . . No matter: whilst I have breath, I will fight you, I will fight you, I will fight you! [*He waves his sword in great sweeping circles, and stops, panting.*] Yes, you have wrested from me everything, laurel as well as rose . . . Work your wills! . . . Spite of your worst, something will still be left me to take whither I go . . . and to-night when I enter God's house, in saluting, broadly will I sweep the azure threshold with what despite of all I carry forth unblemished and unbent . . . [*He starts forward, with lifted sword.*] . . . and that is . . .

[*The sword falls from his hands, he staggers, drops in the arms of* LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU.]

ROXANE [*bending over him and kissing his forehead*]. That is? . . .

CYRANO [*opens his eyes again, recognizes her and says with a smile*]. . . . My plume!

CURTAIN

PASTEUR

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

By SACHA GUITRY

Translated by IRVING H. BROWN

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TO MY FATHER

AS A TOKEN OF LOVE, GRATITUDE, AND
ADMIRATION

S.

PREFACE

It was while reading the beautiful work of M. René Vallery-Radot that the idea came to me to make Pasteur the hero of a play.

I thought of it frequently — but the presentation on the stage of such a personage seemed to me impossible, and I was on the point of renouncing the project when my father did me the honor of asking me to write a play for him. The idea of *Pasteur* came to my mind again, and I re-read the book which had aroused my enthusiasm three years before. In re-reading those magnificent pages my emotion was even greater than it had been before. It seemed to me that I had the right to undertake a work for which I felt an irresistible desire.

In several instances I have used entire sentences pronounced by Louis Pasteur, not only at the meetings of the Academy of Medicine, but at the Sorbonne and elsewhere.

These sentences are in italics in the play.

I do not believe that I have at any time betrayed the memory of a man whose life I passionately admire, whose memory I venerate, and to whose immortal glory it will be sweet to me to have contributed in the feeble measure, alas, of my ability.

SACHA GUITRY

CHARACTERS

Louis Pasteur
His Students
A Doctor
The President of the Academy of Medicine
An Old Savant
Two Doctors
Joseph Meister
His Grandfather
Valet de Chambre
The President of the Republic

During the meeting of the Academy of Medicine, at the opening of Act II, the voice of M. Poggiale is heard and that of M. Jules Guérin

PASTEUR

ACT I

1870

SCENE: *The laboratory of* LOUIS PASTEUR. *When the curtain goes up five of his students are discovered. They are waiting for him.*

THIRD STUDENT. The latest news is n't encouraging . . .

FIRST STUDENT. No . . .

FOURTH STUDENT. When do you go?

FIFTH STUDENT. The first day . . .

FOURTH STUDENT. So do I . . . How about you Normal students, you won't be called?

SECOND STUDENT. It does n't look like it.

FIRST STUDENT. I don't think there's anything to worry about, after all. It's the fifth alarm in three years.

SECOND STUDENT. Wait till we get tonight's news!

THIRD STUDENT. What's today's lecture about?

FIRST STUDENT. I suppose he'll continue . . .

THIRD STUDENT. He was nervous yesterday.

SECOND STUDENT. As far as that goes, he's been nervous ever since he returned from Munich.

FOURTH STUDENT. Just what happened there?

FIRST STUDENT. He told me the other day, but I think it would be better not to talk to him about it.

FOURTH STUDENT. Of course not. Tell us.

FIRST STUDENT. He made the trip just to see Liebig and to convince him of his theory of fermentations. He listened to him, but refused to discuss the matter on the pretext that he was not well.

FOURTH STUDENT. That shows all right that he's weakening and won't admit it.

FIRST STUDENT. Certainly, but that was n't enough for Pasteur. He's never satisfied until he's convinced his opponent.

THIRD STUDENT. He certainly has temperament.

FIFTH STUDENT. Yes, but I think it's partly temper.

FIRST STUDENT. Do you think he's bad-tempered?

FIFTH STUDENT. He does n't seem easy to get along with.

FIRST STUDENT. What can you expect? Why should he be easy to get along with? He's chief exponent of the exact sciences. You know, it seems to me, one would have to be quite skeptical to be able to smile, and above everything he has a horror of skepticism! Doubters are odious to him, because they do him harm, because they hold him back without ever being of any use to him. People who doubt always doubt on general principles, as a matter of fact — they never furnish any proofs — all they do is sit and smile. It seems as though they were afraid of any precision. Truth must hit them in the face before they'll acknowledge it. Those who've never discovered a trace of truth are so conceited that they imagine that it's undiscoverable. And you and I who have seen him work, we must admit, must n't we, that one cannot really know him if he even so much as asks him for the proof of any theory he advances.

FIFTH STUDENT. Then your confidence in him is absolute?

FIRST STUDENT. Yes, indeed: I look upon him as — a natural force — as — something superhuman. He's so genuine, so great! Moreover I can never look at him or hear him without a feeling that I can't put into words. And you feel as I do —

THE REST. We certainly do —

FIRST STUDENT. Why should we be patronizing, then, because he is n't here?

FIFTH STUDENT. I admire him profoundly —

FIRST STUDENT. That is not what we're talking about. It is n't a question of admiring him.

FIFTH STUDENT. However —

FIRST STUDENT. You can do better than that.

FIFTH STUDENT. I can't worship him, though.

FIRST STUDENT. And why not? I worship him: I've been here longer than any of you. Not one of you has taken his course for more than two months — and you, this is only the third time you've been here. You can't realize yet, and I know why, all right; you've never yet seen him make a discovery.

FIFTH STUDENT. I know everything he's done so far.

FIRST STUDENT. I know, old man, but you've never seen him on the scent — you have never seen him at work — searching for himself — finding for all. Remember I would n't speak of any of these things before everybody, because I should seem like a fanatic, but between us, take my word for it, you could n't speak so of him if you had ever seen him live that supreme instant when suddenly the unknown probable becomes before his eyes a formal and definite certainty — if you had ever seen his face grow pale and be transformed with a beauty, I swear, really God-like! Six months from now we can talk this over again!

FIFTH STUDENT. You think that he can't make a mistake?

FIRST STUDENT. He make a mistake! I give you my word such an idea seems absolutely preposterous to me. How can he — he never starts out without knowing where he's going to end.

FIFTH STUDENT. Why, then, he must be God Almighty.

FIRST STUDENT. Umphm!

FIFTH STUDENT. You're joking?

FIRST STUDENT. I never joke where he's concerned.

FIFTH STUDENT. Then you believe in God?

FIRST STUDENT. No, but I believe in him! Yes, you can laugh if you want to, only don't try too hard.

FIFTH STUDENT. I'm not laughing, my dear man, and I respect your enthusiasm, but see here, now that we're on the subject will you explain to me, seeing that you don't believe in God, how it happens that *he* has such a deep Faith?

FIRST STUDENT. He has Faith, — because, in the first place, all of us have a little down deep in our hearts, — and while most of us try to get rid of it, his own has been heightened because he's both the most modest man in the world and the most self-confident you've ever seen.

FIFTH STUDENT. I don't understand.

FIRST STUDENT. How well *he* could explain it to you!

FIFTH STUDENT. You try.

FIRST STUDENT. He has such confidence in himself, he is so convinced that some day he will attain the end he has set for himself — that his modesty must persuade him to believe that a mere man, without the aid of a Supreme Power, would never be able to realize the projects conceived by his genius. His faith gives him courage, perhaps, to persevere in a work he would abandon if he felt he was all alone. When you come to fully appreciate the character of the man we're talking about, you'll admit the necessity, in certain exceptional beings, of a kind of superstition, without which their pride would be overbearing. Faith is not a weakness so long as one places his daily work above it. For him it is not a refuge — and if you ever spoke to him of discouragement you'd see him point to the laboratory — not to the church — and you'd hear these words which are graven on my memory: "There is the remedy!" As to his private life, which I know also, take my word, it will serve as an example some day. Hush! Here he is!

[LOUIS PASTEUR *has come in. His students stand and bow to him.*]

PASTEUR. Good morning!

ALL. Good morning, Master.

PASTEUR. Excuse me for being late.

THIRD STUDENT. You're not ill, are you, Master?

PASTEUR. Not at all! No! I'm uneasy!

ALL. Ah! —

PASTEUR. Yes. However, I must admit they seemed calmer at the Cabinet Office this morning than yesterday. All the danger is not entirely averted and I believe I can see how matters may be arranged within two or three days, — however, we'll know for certain by evening. But in the peculiar state of mind in which I happen to be, I should like very much, my friends, to ask if you care if I put off our lecture till tomorrow.

ALL. Why, certainly not, Master.

PASTEUR. It is n't to get rid of you, that I ask this. Stay here, stay, please, let's all wait together — and — chat till we get the news.

[*All accept willingly, but the silence which ensues, a respectful and constrained silence, proves how little* PASTEUR *is in the habit of chatting.*]

PASTEUR. How old are you, my boy?

FIFTH STUDENT. Twenty-three, Master.

[PASTEUR *smiles at him; the student is embarrassed.*]

PASTEUR. How unfortunate it would be — [*a pause*] *You're* married, are n't you?

THIRD STUDENT. Yes, Master.

PASTEUR [*having looked at all of them*]. My dear friends [*a pause*]. Have you any idea that the people realize what's likely to happen?

FIRST STUDENT. I don't think so.

SECOND STUDENT. At any rate, wherever you go, people seem quite confident and unconcerned. — Last night I was at the Variétés Theatre, and there was an enormous crowd —

THIRD STUDENT. What was the play?

SECOND STUDENT. *La Belle Hélène.* Schneider is wonderful.

THIRD STUDENT. You never go to the theatre, Monsieur Pasteur?

PASTEUR. Yes — sometimes.

THIRD STUDENT. But you've never been to the Variétés?

PASTEUR. Hum — once, I think. Is it amusing?

SECOND STUDENT. They have an admirable company.

PASTEUR. I get up so early that, really, I'm rather tired by evening.

THIRD STUDENT. Besides, Master, you probably don't enjoy the theatre?

PASTEUR. Why not? I wish I had the leisure to know it and enjoy it better. I enjoy everything, my boy, and I never condemn anything which may contribute to my country's fame. It's too bad my work won't permit me to take up everything that might interest me. What is *La Belle Hélène?*

SECOND STUDENT. It's a comic opera, Master.

PASTEUR. Well, now, that's all right. Don't be ashamed today of what amused you yesterday. You're young enough so that your work won't suffer from the amusements you indulge in! You say that the crowd seemed to you rather unconscious of the present situation?

SECOND STUDENT. Yes.

PASTEUR. Too much so, unfortunately. I wish I might say a few things, that are a reproach to my country, without seeming too much like a grumbler. Even now people think I complain too much — and I don't say a tenth of what I think. For more than twenty years I've suffered at the disregard France has shown for great works of the mind. We are still paying for Marat's mistakes. Do you remember what Lagrange said after Lavoisier's death on the scaffold? He said: "It only took them a moment to cut off that head and a hundred years, perhaps, will be too short to produce another like it." Without a doubt, the victim of its political instability, France has done nothing to maintain, to spread, and develop the progress of science in our country. She has been satisfied with simply going along on the original impetus. She has lived on her past, imagining herself ever greater because of the scientific discoveries to which she owed her material prosperity, without realizing that she has been foolishly allowing the sources to be exhausted, while neighboring nations,

stimulated from within, have diverted the stream to their own ends and rendered it productive by their labor, and by their efforts and sacrifices wisely combined. While Germany has been increasing the number of its universities, and encouraging a most wholesome rivalry among them and has surrounded its professors and doctors with honor and consideration, France enervated by revolutions, always engaged in a vain search for the best form of government, has given only divided attention to its institutions of higher learning. And nevertheless, all foreign nations acknowledged our superiority. Great discoveries, great ideas in the realms of Art, Science, and Letters, in a word all the disinterested work of the mind in every field, have introduced into the whole social order a spirit of discernment which submits everything to the candid examination of reason, condemns ignorance, and banishes prejudice and errors. For twenty years I've been fighting to get people out of the rut, and those who don't dismiss my ideas with a shrug, listen without paying much attention. They consider me a visionary. Good Heavens! When you think of the number of people who must have become discouraged! One must love his country very dearly, my friends, to have the strength to bear with her weaknesses! The sixth of September, 1867, I sent the Emperor a note in which I brought to his attention the fact that I found it impossible to carry on my work without a laboratory. He was quite willing to transmit through Duruy the order to have the laboratory constructed immediately. In October of the following year it had not been commenced, and when I fell sick, a government order came to discontinue the work, because it was said that Monsieur Pasteur would not live the week out. The utilization of my discoveries was dependent on my life! And, if you sometimes see me sad and out of sorts, it is because I have n't always the strength to be angry. Discouraged, never! — Tired, sometimes — as today! — They are shouting in the street! Quick! See what it is!

[*The* THIRD STUDENT *goes out on the run. A pause.* PASTEUR *and the rest await his return, without stirring.*]

THIRD STUDENT [*entering out of breath*]. Monsieur Pasteur! War's declared! I'm going to tell my family.

[PASTEUR *shakes hands with him. A moment later he is gone. A pause. They all look at the Master.*]

PASTEUR. Who of you go the first day?

FIFTH STUDENT. I, Monsieur Pasteur, I can go.

PASTEUR. Good, let me kiss you, my boy. Goodbye.

FIFTH STUDENT. Goodbye, Master.

[*He shakes hands with his comrades, then goes out.*]

PASTEUR. And you?

FIRST STUDENT. We three are Normal students.

PASTEUR. Good! [*A pause.*] Well, let's get to work, boys. Let's get to work! Let's not waste a second! [*Then addressing the* FIRST STUDENT.] Tomorrow I'll send my doctor's degree back to Germany. Let's work. I'll dictate: "Our cruelest enemies, bacteria . . ."

CURTAIN

ACT II

1880

The first part of the act takes place in the assembly room of the Academy of Medicine.

PASTEUR. *Several weeks ago you were debating as to how the Academy might, in a higher degree, introduce the true scientific spirit into its work and discussions. Let me indicate a way which, I am fully confident, will prove successful. It consists in a sort of mental pledge on the part of each one of us never to call this desk a "tribune," never to speak of a communication made here as a "discourse," or to call one an "orator" who has just spoken or is just about to speak! Let us leave such expressions to deliberative political bodies which discuss things which are often so difficult to prove!* [*Applause.*]

THE PRESIDENT OF THE ACADEMY. We did well, gentlemen, to applaud the sug-

gestion of Monsieur Pasteur — and I personally congratulate him for having made it. Giving each of you his turn, Monsieur Poggiale has the floor —

POGGIALE. I have only a few words to say and it is to Monsieur Pasteur that I speak! We all of us here have the same regard for him — and, for my part, I gladly accept his suggestions as to our meetings, on condition that he will have a little regard for our traditions! Now, Monsieur Pasteur told us that he tried to discover spontaneous generation for twenty years. — He will search for it a great while longer, and, notwithstanding his courage and his perseverance, I doubt whether he will find it — the question is practically insoluble. In the meantime, those who, like me, have no fixed opinion about spontaneous generation reserve the right to verify, to examine and to discuss the facts, one after another, as they are advanced, from whatever source they may come —

PASTEUR. *What! I have been at work on a subject for twenty years, and I have no right to an opinion — and the right to verify, to examine and to discuss, and to question shall belong especially to those who do nothing to enlighten, to those who just happen to read our works more or less attentively, their feet on the andirons in their studies!!! You have no opinion upon spontaneous generation, my dear colleague, I can readily believe it, although it is regrettable! You say that in the present state of science it is wisest not to have an opinion? Very well; but as for me I have one! . . . My opinion, nay, my conviction is, that spontaneous generation is a myth! . . . What conclusion do you entertain as to my experiments? . . . How is it that you do not see the essential difference between me and my adversaries? I have contradicted all their assertions with the proofs in my hands and they have never dared seriously to contradict one of mine! . . . What is your intention, then? To contest my assertions! Then attack my experiments! Prove that they are inexact instead of continually making new ones which are only variations of my own, but into which you introduce errors which later must be pointed out to you!*

[*Prolonged movement of surprise.*]

M. POGGIALE. There are still a number of points, Monsieur Pasteur, to be cleared up on the subject of fermentation!

PASTEUR. *But what sort of an idea have you, then, in regard to scientific progress? Science takes a step, then another, then it stops and reflects before taking a third! Does the impossibility of taking this last step nullify the good results from the first two? A mother takes her nursing child and puts him down, and says to him: "Walk!" The child takes a step, then another, then stops unsteadily . . . Would you do right, then, to say to him: "You're hesitating, you'll never walk!" Let me tell you that the characteristic feature of true theories is their fruitfulness!* Moreover, I have decided to reply today to certain insinuations which I can no longer tolerate!

Certain of my adversaries think, for example, that on the question of spontaneous generation, I am obeying a prejudice, a conclusion formed in advance.

I consider such insinuations insulting . . .

[*Sensation.*]

Now, Science should never concern itself in any way with the philosophical consequences of its work! I repeat that the doctrine of spontaneous generation is a myth. I still defy my adversaries to contradict me, and with the same independence I add: so much the worse for them if their philosophical or political ideas are imperiled by my researches! In each one of us are two men, the scientist who aspires to bring about a knowledge of nature and who has started with a clean slate . . . and the man of sentiment, a believer or a skeptic, the man who weeps for his children when they are no more, who cannot, alas! prove that he will see them again, but who believes and hopes so, who does n't want to be wiped out of existence like a microorganism, and who says to himself that the life force that is in him will be transformed. The two domains are distinct and woe to him who would make one encroach upon the other, in the imperfect condition of human knowledge. [*Applause.*]

I am not willing to leave this desk without having said exactly what I think to certain of you who persist in disputing the results of my experiments.

Do you know what you need, Monsieur Fremy? It's to get the habit of using the microscope! . . . You are always trying to evade the question . . .

[*One hears an "Oh!" followed by a prolonged sensation.*]

And, when you answer me, you never furnish the slightest proof . . . while I — I intend to enclose you in a circle of demonstrations! [*Considerable confusion.*]

I would have you know, sir, that the best proof that an experimenter is upon the right track is that his works are constantly productive.

Never take any other guide than experiment!

I would also have you know, gentlemen, . . . that Science, in our century, is the soul of national prosperity and the living fountain of all progress! Of course, politics, with its vexatious daily questions, seems to be our guide . . . mere delusion! Our advance is due to certain scientific discoveries and their applications!

Why did France conquer in '92? It was because Science had added to the courage of our fathers the material means to fight and to conquer! . . . Why was it that in 1870 France did not find superior men in its hour of peril? It was because of the contempt which she had had for the great works of the mind! . . .

It is time to turn about. It is necessary for each one of us, by incessant labor, to endeavor to shape the future. With all my might I denounce those who persist in prolonging discussions with the evident purpose of hindering researches which they cannot comprehend!

So the doctors are skeptical in regard to germs! The little creatures seem funny to them! However, no matter what happens, they must recognize their existence . . .

I know that one of us, M. Jules Guérin, said at Bouley this summer: "All I want is to down Pasteur." . . . Very well, Monsieur Jules Guérin, I'm waiting . . . I'm still waiting! . . . On what point are you so anxious to down me?

M. Jules Guérin. When the time comes, Monsieur Pasteur, I . . .

Pasteur. But the time has come, my dear colleague! Speak out . . . please . . . Is it still in regard to small-pox?

M. Jules Guérin. Yes, my dear colleague! . . . I assert that human vaccine is the product of small-pox in animals, inoculated in man and humanized by successive transmissions through human beings! . . .

Pasteur. *Now! . . . Now! . . . Now! . . . Why, my dear colleague, reflect upon what you have just said to me . . . You have just declared in short that vaccine is vaccine . . . Superb!* [*Laughter and confusion.*]

Well, I tell you that to set up the claim to explain the relation between small-pox and vaccine, without even mentioning the word small-pox, is merely juggling with words . . .

[*Violent confusion, shouts. The student of* Pasteur, *the first student in Act I, appears and remains speechless, listening to the tumult.* Pasteur *dominates the noise.*]

You are wrong to insist, Monsieur Guérin! You're talking about something you don't know anything about! . . . You're still back in the days when we used lint, Monsieur Guérin! . . . We have already gotten a long way ahead of you! . . . It won't do you any good simply to make phrases and shake your fist at me . . . No more words, sir . . . give me facts, arguments . . . Enough time has been lost, can't you see! . . . I have noted your recent declaration . . . From this time forth we are face to face, Monsieur Guérin, and we shall see which one of us comes out crippled and bruised from this struggle!

[*The tumult begins again. A few minutes later these words are heard:* "The meeting is adjourned."]

[*It is now the second part of the act. It takes place in a small room, a sort of cloak room next to the audience room.* Pasteur, *accompanied by an* Old Savant, *enters, flushed, beside himself, still feverishly excited.*]

Pasteur. Well, if I did wrong, so much the worse! . . . I've held that in for too long a time!

Old Savant. But that was terrible, what happened there . . . you know . . . terrible . . . I've never seen anything like it! You acted like a mad man . . . You were n't master of your thoughts! . . .

Pasteur. Indeed! . . . Not master of my thoughts! I knew just what I was saying . . . and I'm ready to repeat to them everything that I just said! . . .

Old Savant. Take my advice it would be better not to re-open the matter! . . . You used terms . . . I give you my word . . . that these walls are not accustomed to!

Pasteur. Let them get accustomed! . . . Certainly and I freely admit that I did n't use the academic style to which you're all accustomed! . . . I took the shortest course! . . . How much time you waste in shaping phrases . . . my poor friends!

Old Savant. Do not forget that we are next to the French Academy . . .

Pasteur. Well, it can't be helped, but it's too bad . . . since it has a deplorable influence on you! . . .

The Pupil. In regard to this, Master, I'd like . . .

Pasteur. By and by, my son, by and by! . . . I shan't come again, that's all there is to it! . . . If the meetings are to consist of conversations I shall henceforth refrain from attending them! . . . I shall make my communication to you in writing! . . . As for seeking to prove to them the statements I make . . . I must also give that up, must n't I?

Old Savant. Why, no . . .

Pasteur. Why, yes! . . . Don't you remember the day I brought to one of our meetings a cage with three live chickens in it, to convince those who still doubted? My! How amusing it seemed to them! You've never gotten over it . . . Some were furious, others smiled! Was it really so comical?

Old Savant. Theoretically. You are always right, my dear Pasteur . . .

Pasteur. Not at all, not theoretically . . . I don't care to be right theoretically . . . I want to be and am absolutely right!

Old Savant. I meant that even your criticism just now was pertinent . . . but the words which you used . . . were not exactly what we had expected . . .

Pasteur. Oh! But you never expect anything! . . . You imagine that all life is bound up in your existence . . . and as your existence is bound up in the Academy, you'll never get very far! . . . When once you're there, you say to yourself: "It's the end!" In your eyes it's a place of final rest . . . but I don't agree with you at all! . . . And do you know, the ones who are the most bitterly opposed to me? . . . the doctors . . . because I'm not a doctor! To be sure, I come along and interfere with their habits without any warning . . . I upset their dangerous routine . . . I climb over the last wall behind which they believe themselves sheltered . . . then, naturally, they get angry and cry, "Shame!" So much the worse! . . . They shan't stop me! . . . I know I'm right . . . I have all but reached the goal . . . I will attain it! . . . What? . . . Should I risk my life every day and hesitate to disturb their sweet repose? . . . I should say not! . . . I could never forgive myself. They don't realize *all they owe to one who introduces something new!* . . . Some of these doctors are rogues, let me tell you!

Old Savant. Ssh! . . . Ssh! . . . Ssh! . . .

Pasteur. You can't keep me still! . . . When you think that they would n't believe in antiseptics! . . . When you think that *I* even had to beg them to sterilize their instruments before performing an operation! . . . I don't like those physicians who are always giving the impression that they have just saved some one . . . and who calmly imagine that the patient's pain is over as soon as their visit is over!

Old Savant. They are n't all of them rogues . . .

Pasteur. Oh! Why, no, of course not . . . and those who are not don't need me . . . I'm only concerned with the rest! . . . I'm only concerned with those who evade me . . . every time I try to show them their errors . . . Let me assure you, however, that if they'd be willing to acknowledge their errors, the discussions would never become embittered . . . It's their stubbornness which irritates me! . . . They talk of their moral position, to which they've no right,

while I'm talking to them of the health of the world! . . . Our errors are vital, remember that . . . If an archæologist makes a mistake in deciphering a text of the seventh century B.C. . . . my goodness, his mistake won't have very serious consequences . . . For such men, for whose work I have infinite respect, it 's the past which is in question . . . for us it's the future . . . and that affects us quite differently!

OLD SAVANT. But, my great, my good Pasteur, you might have said all that . . . without attacking poor old Guérin . . . He's eighty years old . . .

PASTEUR. Am *I* to blame that he's as old as that? Why does he attack me? . . . Did I ever concern myself about him? . . . No!

OLD SAVANT. You don't agree on a certain point . . .

PASTEUR. But what does he know about it? . . . He thinks that he has n't the same opinion as I! . . .

[*Two physicians have just entered.*]

FIRST PHYSICIAN. My dear Pasteur, we're here on a very painful . . . and delicate mission . . .

PASTEUR. Well, what's the matter now?

SECOND PHYSICIAN. Our friend, M. Jules Guérin, being offended by expressions which you used, a little while ago . . . has sent us to you as seconds . . .

PASTEUR. Seconds for what?

FIRST PHYSICIAN. The words which you saw fit to use . . .

PASTEUR. Well, then . . .

SECOND PHYSICIAN. He demands satisfaction with weapons . . .

PASTEUR. A duel? . . .

THE TWO PHYSICIANS. Yes . . .

PASTEUR. There you are . . . there you are, gentlemen, this is what we've come to! . . . Now see the result of your methods! . . . I propose to cure their fellow-beings and they propose a duel . . . This is getting to be really funny! . . . You might make me laugh, gentlemen, and it seems that would hardly do! . . . No, but really can you picture me fighting a duel with that old gentleman? You have a strange way of understanding science! . . . You were quite right, we don't agree, M. Guérin and I . . . You can tell M. Guérin for me, that we don't agree!

FIRST PHYSICIAN. Why . . . M. Guérin knows that very well! . . . And it's precisely because you don't agree with him . . . that we're here . . .

PASTEUR. Very well, but . . . when M. Guérin agrees with me on a point which seems to me vastly more important . . . perhaps I shall consider the possibility of fighting him! . . . But, as long as he won't use the word human small-pox, I don't care to meet him! . . . That would be altogether too simple? . . . Ah! He claims that human vaccine is the product of the small-pox of animals — humanized, as he calls it . . . Very well, we shall see! . . . And then, to cap the climax, he wants to fight! . . .

FIRST PHYSICIAN. You insulted him . . .

PASTEUR. *I* insulted *him?*

SECOND PHYSICIAN. You said to him that we'd see, one of these days, "which one of you would come out of the conflict crippled."

PASTEUR. It's a prediction, not an insult!

FIRST PHYSICIAN. We must fulfill our mission . . .

PASTEUR. Certainly! Certainly! Fulfill it . . .

SECOND PHYSICIAN. You must put us in touch with two of your friends . . .

PASTEUR. What friends?

FIRST PHYSICIAN. Your seconds . . .

PASTEUR. My seconds! What a farce! . . . Very well, see Beclard and Bergeron, they're always ready to second me! . . . But don't deceive yourselves! . . . There'll be no duel, that's not the way *I* fight! . . .

SECOND PHYSICIAN. But supposing he had struck you? . . .

PASTEUR. Supposing he had struck me? . . . But, you see, it is n't a question of striking . . . we're not schoolboys!

OLD SAVANT. My dear Pasteur, just remember that a single word from you could settle all this . . .

PASTEUR. What word?

OLD SAVANT. Express to these gentlemen that you regret . . .

PASTEUR. What?

Old Savant. That you used words which perhaps were a little stronger than you intended . . .

Pasteur. Not at all! . . . I thought I was very clear . . .

Old Savant. Too much so . . .

Pasteur. No . . .

Old Savant. Remember that the stenographic report of the meeting will appear in the official Bulletin of the Academy . . .

Pasteur. Listen, once for all! I shall do exactly what the President of the Academy advises me. *Not having the right to do otherwise I am ready to modify whatever may seem to have exceeded the right of criticism or of legitimate defense!* . . . Yes, I'm perfectly willing to modify the printed text . . . not having written it . . . but what I've said, I will not retract! And as to M. Guérin, advise him to let me alone henceforth . . . He boasted that he'd "down Pasteur" . . . these are his exact words . . . Will he be so good as to give up the idea? . . . I bid you good day, gentlemen! . . .

[*The two physicians go towards the back of the stage. As they are going out they meet the* President of the Academy *who has just entered. They exchange a few words.*]

The Student. Master, I should like to tell you —

Pasteur. Just a minute, my boy, just a minute —

President of the Academy. My dear Pasteur —

Pasteur. My dear President, I am sorry —

President of the Academy. I'm more sorry than you, my dear Pasteur, and you will understand why — This incident will have no sequel — for you have just said to those gentlemen exactly what you ought to have said to them — but I was obliged to adjourn the meeting which deprived me of a very great pleasure — At the conclusion of today's session I was going to tell you a great piece of news — and I should have been glad to do it in the presence of all your colleagues — who, frequently, alas! do not give you those tributes of attention and admiration which your genius and the vast importance of your research might demand. You have opened up more than one new channel and you have a right to our respect and to our gratitude. I was to have presented to you, at the close of the session, in behalf of the government, the insignia of the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor . . . Here they are with the assurance of my deepest and most sincere admiration. [*He hands him a case.*]

Pasteur. My dear President, I'm ashamed to have deprived you of this pleasure . . . I'm ashamed, and at the same time I'm very proud of the honor which they are kind enough to do me! . . . I wish to consider it as a mark of encouragement . . . and shall not consider it as a reward . . . for I should n't feel worthy of it as yet . . . but I hope and believe that . . . my health will permit me to reach the goal . . . to which I aspire . . . and, then . . . I shall perhaps really merit . . . this mark of esteem and confidence which my country is good enough to confer upon me! . . . But, how does it happen, on the one hand . . . that the government of France is willing to recognize the usefulness of my discoveries . . . although, in such matters her judgment is inevitably limited . . . while, on the other hand . . . those who by their positions ought not to entangle themselves in trivial discussions . . . how does it happen that the former are more clear-sighted than the latter? . . . This is a very great honor . . . I am deeply moved by it . . . but it is not the thing I wanted most today . . . It's very fine! . . . it's . . . it's magnificent — but they — they — why won't they understand? . . .

President of the Academy. Pasteur, they are your colleagues . . . and you do them much harm in doing so much good! . . .

Pasteur. What a miserable state of affairs! . . . [*Turning to his student.*] Look, my boy, is n't this fine . . . and how good they are to me! . . . How pleased Madame Pasteur and my dear children will be . . .

Student. And that's not all, Master . . .

Pasteur. What else is there?

Student. Mr. President, you'll be very

pleased to hear what I came to tell M. Pasteur . . .

PRESIDENT OF THE ACADEMY. Go on, go on . . .

STUDENT. The death of M. Littré leaves a place vacant in the French Academy . . .

PASTEUR. Oh! no, no, no . . . not that! . . .

STUDENT. But, Master, it's done . . .

PASTEUR. What, it's done?

STUDENT. I knew that the matter would come up at once . . . I went there, I've just come from there . . . you will be unanimously elected! . . . On the subject of the usual visits, M. Alexandre Dumas used exactly these words; he said: "I forbid Pasteur to come to my house . . . I will go myself to thank him for being indeed willing to be one of us!" . . .

PASTEUR. Oh! . . .

STUDENT. And M. Renan at once expressed the desire to receive you! . . .

PRESIDENT OF THE ACADEMY. My dear friend . . .

[*He shakes both his hands, the* OLD SAVANT *does the same.*]

PASTEUR. Oh . . . Oh . . . How wonderful . . . How wonderful it all is! . . . Thank you, my boy! . . . It's splendid . . . it 's . . . it's overwhelming . . . just think . . . the French Academy . . . how am I going to talk to them . . . I who have already expressed myself here in such a peculiar way . . .

PRESIDENT OF THE ACADEMY. You won't need to get exasperated there . . . you will have no one to contradict you . . . I'm quite easy as far as you are concerned . . . you'll make a fine impression there!

STUDENT. I'm so happy for your sake, Master . . .

PASTEUR. And I, my son, I'm so happy for yours . . . and for the great who are no longer here . . . and who were my masters! . . . How wonderful it all is . . . how moved I am . . . how! . . . Oh! . . . They're going to understand, are n't they, my dear friend, now . . . they'll finally understand, won't they?

PRESIDENT OF THE ACADEMY. Why, yes!

PASTEUR. It would really be too bad . . . it would be very unfortunate! . . . It would really be abominable for me . . . I know very well . . . that . . . all these honors . . . would seem to me disproportionate . . . would seem to me unjust . . . would perhaps seem odious to me . . . if they did n't consider them absolutely deserved! . . . It occurs to me . . . it just occurs to me . . . and I swear to you . . . I swear to you sincerely from the bottom of my heart, that I'm overcome by what has just happened in the last ten minutes . . . when I think of what happened, a little while ago! . . . I feel a certain doubt . . . I don't know how to express it . . . which embarrasses me . . . which troubles me greatly . . . I'm not willing that they should impose silence upon me . . . I will not permit them to keep me silent . . . with anything like that. It has been their way, perhaps, of answering questions which I have n't asked! . . . I'm willing to accept all these splendid things, these magnificent things . . . but let there be no false impression, no misunderstanding . . . I did n't ask for it . . . it's very wonderful . . . it's . . . all that one could wish for, but it must n't bind me . . . Don't let them get it into their heads that such a thing could happen! . . . It would be too easy! . . . Be sure and tell them, my dear President, that at the next session I'm going to continue! . . . I feel in duty bound to tell you that in a few days I'm going to have to communicate to them the first results of some work which I've undertaken in the matter of a new discovery . . . It relates to a method of curing hydrophobia!

THE PRESIDENT AND THE OLD SAVANT. Oh! . . .

PASTEUR. Yes! . . . I'm satisfied with the experiments I've made . . . and I'm going to tell them about it before having completely attained my end! . . . I'm going to do this in a spirit of fairness . . . so that they may have the possibility of following me and of having a part in it . . . Let me tell you that all this . . . well . . . it seems very wonderful . . . to me . . . only I'm not through, you understand . . . so then, I only wish that we could all agree, every one of us . . . I'm in the midst of a piece of work . . . and they won't prevent

me from continuing . . . I'd like to believe that in presence of these . . . [*he shows the insignia of the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor*] . . . they will have patience to listen to me to the end! . . . To say that human vaccine is the product of the small-pox of animals humanized . . . Oh!!!

Once more he is filled with anger as

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT III

1885

The scene is the same as Act I, PASTEUR'S *study. He is at his desk writing. After a time there is a knock.*

PASTEUR. Come in! [*The* STUDENT *enters.*] Come in, my friend, I beg you . . .

STUDENT. I'm not disturbing you, Master? Am I?

PASTEUR. Not at all, not at all! . . . Never! . . . Anything new happened?

STUDENT. No, Master . . .

PASTEUR. You look worried.

STUDENT. No! No! . . .

PASTEUR. Will you be good enough to look over the proofs of the address I delivered in Edinburgh . . . I'm afraid I may have overlooked some mistakes.

STUDENT. Yes, Master.

PASTEUR. It was fine, was n't it, what they did over there! It was magnificent! . . . And you see that recognition has come at last! . . . It was really superb . . .

STUDENT. Oh, yes! . . . And you were very much moved, Master . . .

PASTEUR. Very much . . . I admit . . .

STUDENT. And you could n't believe that it was you they were cheering. You kept looking about for the person they were applauding when you entered . . .

PASTEUR. It was so tremendous . . . that, of course, I could n't believe it was for me . . . Besides, it was n't for me . . . I merely represented French Science . . .

STUDENT. H'm . . .

PASTEUR. After all . . . how could I believe that a foreign country should have wanted to do for me what France has not yet felt it her duty to do . . . It would be a lesson . . . but it would be bad! . . . Above all . . . I don't want the newspapers to give that impression . . . I should be . . . ashamed . . . Moreover, I 'm going to publish my address in order to make things perfectly definite! . . . I've sometimes gone too far . . . I've often been hasty . . . well, I was fighting! . . . but the goal is reached . . . now I'm calm . . .

A scientist ought to be concerned with what they'll say of him in a hundred years and not with the insults or compliments of the present!

I was so absolutely right, that at present it's my duty to be silent and to work while I wait for the material results of my discoveries! . . . I went on experimenting. I felt it my duty to attract the attention of those who doubted, so that they would n't be too much surprised . . . I have succeeded, it's done! . . . I told them, before, that I was on the right track . . . they would n't believe me . . . so much the worse for them! . . . If they had followed me from the first day, if they had n't lost so much time in discussions . . . we would all have reached the goal at the same time! . . . I have really done everything I could not to be entirely alone! . . . The discovery of a serum for hydrophobia, and its results are today incontestable . . . the way is open for the cure of all other diseases . . . I'm through arguing now! . . . So, I beg you all, not to bring up any controversy in my name from now on . . . Everything's proved, I don't care to answer any more arguments, that's over! . . . Now, let's get to work!

STUDENT. Very well, Master!

PASTEUR. I say, "let's work!" . . . However, I'm going to rest today, for I'm tired! [*He rises.*] I slept badly during the entire trip . . . And you?

STUDENT. Not very well . . .

PASTEUR. But, what's the matter with you? You're not looking fit . . .

STUDENT. I . . .

PASTEUR. Go on, my friend, tell me . . . You can tell your old Master everything!

STUDENT. Monsieur Pasteur, I'm going through a terrible crisis . . .

PASTEUR. Go on!

STUDENT. Terrible . . . and I've come to you for advice.

PASTEUR. You did well, my friend . . . What's it about? H'm . . . Why! Is it hard to say?

STUDENT. Yes . . .

PASTEUR. Write it for me . . . [*He points to a pad of paper. The pupil takes a pencil out of his pocket, writes a few words on the sheet which he hands to the Master.* PASTEUR *having read it.*] You must n't . . . One must never hurt any one!

STUDENT. Oh, but if you knew . . .

PASTEUR. I don't need to know . . . I know, I know that you must not! . . .

STUDENT. There are certain situations . . .

PASTEUR. No! . . . There are men to meet them! . . .

STUDENT. Besides, there are women . . .

PASTEUR. Yes . . . but that makes no difference . . . Above all one must be a man! You must never make any one suffer! . . .

STUDENT. And when some one has made you suffer? . . .

PASTEUR. You must n't let them! . . .

STUDENT. H'm . . .

PASTEUR. I mean to say by that, that one should n't think of other things than those which really concern him. And take my word for it, other people don't . . . they must n't, they can't hurt you as much as you imagine! . . . It's only the harm which one himself does that matters! . . . The rest is of little consequence if one has a clear conscience . . . and work!

STUDENT. But when you're carried away by passion? . . .

PASTEUR. But one must n't let himself be carried away! One must have constant control over his actions! No weakness . . . my friend, no slavery! . . . You are evidently passing through a crisis . . . very well, it will give you a chance to stand face to face with yourself so that you may know yourself better, and so that you may see how strong you can be! It's a test . . . study yourself. Don't seek out people who give you advice . . . look rather to those who set you an example . . .

STUDENT. I look to you, Monsieur Pasteur . . . and I admire you . . . but, you!!!

PASTEUR. I'm not so perfect, since I'm lacking in sympathy for you.

STUDENT. For me?

PASTEUR. Absolutely! I can't even get interested in what you just told me . . . because I find you hesitating . . . and I don't like that! . . . This very moment, you're hesitating to do something bad. To me, it's as if you hesitated to do something good! . . . Now, one must never hesitate . . . One should always do what's right and one must never do what's wrong! You know very well what you ought to do! . . . Take a straight line towards the infinite and never swerve! . . . When one does n't know, when one's feeling his way, one may hesitate . . . but when one knows . . . that's all there is to it . . . he must go ahead! . . . And, now, since you've asked my advice . . . I advise you to work at home for a while . . .

STUDENT. Why?

PASTEUR. Because! . . . You'll come back when you're feeling better! . . . I'm upset on your account because of this talk we've just had! . . . I don't wish to prolong it, and I prefer not to take the matter up again! . . . How old are you?

STUDENT. Forty . . .

PASTEUR. You've been married for . . .

STUDENT. For twenty years . . .

PASTEUR. And, if I understand rightly . . . it's, above all, a question of her happiness?

STUDENT. Yes . . .

PASTEUR. It's just as I thought . . . You're hurting some one . . . You want to make yourself believe that you're doing so . . . and you try to find in passion an excuse which your conscience denies you! . . . [*He has gone back and seated himself at his desk. A pause.*] Excuse me, my friend, I have work to do . . . you . . . you'll have to think things over . . . Then, in a few days, we shall see each other again! . . .

STUDENT. Very well, Master . . .

[*During the last part of* PASTEUR'S *speech the* STUDENT *has seen from the window some one rapidly coming across the court-yard and he says,* "Oh!" . . . *then goes out hurriedly.* PASTEUR,

left alone, has resumed his work . . . and now re-reads what he was writing just before the STUDENT *came in.*]

PASTEUR [*alone, reading*]. "*As a man, as far back as I can remember I do not believe I have ever met a student without saying to him: Work and persevere! Work is really recreation and it is the only thing of value to a man and to his country. Whatever career you embrace, aim high. Venerate great men and great things.*" [*There is a knock.*] Come in!

[*The door opens slowly and little* JOSEPH MEISTER *comes in supported by his* GRANDFATHER *and the* STUDENT. *The child has his hands and one leg covered with bandages.*]

STUDENT. Master! . . .

PASTEUR. What is it?

STUDENT. Master! . . .

PASTEUR [*raising his head at last*]. What? . . . Oh! . . . No? . . . Bitten? . . .

STUDENT. Yes . . .

PASTEUR. Hurry, hurry! . . . Come here . . . come, my little boy . . . don't be afraid . . . surely, don't be afraid of me . . . Come here . . .

[*And he has him sit down facing him.*]

THE GRANDFATHER. You're Monsieur Pasteur, monsieur?

PASTEUR. Yes, monsieur . . . Now, tell me quickly how it happened . . .

THE GRANDFATHER. It happened very simply! . . . The child was going to school at Meissengott . . . when the dog met him and jumped at him . . . and being a great deal stronger, naturally, — the child fell down . . . and he only thought of protecting his face with his hands, — while the animal was biting him! . . . A stone-mason who was passing saw the struggle, and came with a bar of iron . . . and pounded the dirty brute so that it ran away . . . and then lifted the child who was covered with blood and brought him home to us. In the meantime the dog ran to the house of his master, Theodore Vone, the grocer of Meissengott, and bit him in the arm . . . then Theodore took his gun and killed him. They opened the dog and found hay, straw and bits of wood in his stomach. I'm telling you these things as they told me I should . . .

PASTEUR. Yes, yes . . . and then . . . Go on . . .

THE GRANDFATHER. When the child was back in the house they washed his bites with fresh water . . . but as they kept hurting him very much, they took him to the apothecary who told us we ought to see a doctor . . . then they went to Dr. Weber at Villé! . . . He put something on his hands and leg, and told us that they would be better the next day! . . . But the next day they were n't any better at all . . . quite the contrary . . . the little fellow . . . cried a great deal . . . and then he had a fever . . . he was sort of restless . . . his whole body was in convulsions . . . and then he was cold . . . and then he was very much frightened . . . and then he was very thirsty . . . Then the doctor, who came to see him the next day, saw clearly that things were not going well . . . He told us that he was afraid of hydrophobia . . . and then he told us that there was only one man who might possibly save him, and that was Monsieur Pasteur . . . because he had just found, he said, something for that disease . . . although he was not a physician . . . then he gave us a letter for you, monsieur . . . and I brought the little one . . . because the mother was taken sick after this blow . . . and so here's the letter for you, monsieur.

PASTEUR. Let me have it. Let me have it . . .

[PASTEUR *opens the letter and glances through it.*]

THE GRANDFATHER. As to Theodore Vone . . . there's no cause to worry about him . . . the nasty dog's teeth did n't even go through his shirt . . . so, he's all right . . . but the little fellow . . . it's more serious . . . unfortunately . . . [*To the child.*] How do you feel, my boy?

[*The child does not reply.*]

PASTEUR. What, he was bitten Thursday?

THE GRANDFATHER. Yes, monsieur . . .

PASTEUR. Oh! You should have come sooner . . .

THE GRANDFATHER. Well! To come from Alsace, monsieur, takes time!

PASTEUR. Come here, my little man . . . come, don't be afraid.

THE GRANDFATHER [*in* PASTEUR'S *ear*]. You'd better be careful on your own account, monsieur . . . the doctor told me that we must look out for his saliva . . .

PASTEUR. Yes, yes . . . thanks! . . . Come here, my boy . . . poor little man! Show me your hands . . . How old is he?

THE GRANDFATHER. He's just nine! . . .

PASTEUR. Let me see them! Let me see them.

[*He removes the bandages which cover his hands.*]

THE GRANDFATHER. It's true what the doctor said?

PASTEUR. Alas! . . . Sit down, my boy . . . [*To the* STUDENT.] We must . . . at once! . . .

STUDENT. Very well, Master . . .

PASTEUR. The janitor of the laboratory always sleeps here, does n't he?

STUDENT. Yes, Master . . .

PASTEUR. Have the bed made up immediately . . .

STUDENT. Very well, Master . . .

PASTEUR. And put the child to bed at once. Have Madame Henriette look after him! [*To the child.*] We're going to fix you up, my little man. [*The* STUDENT *goes out. To the* GRANDFATHER.] Take him that way . . . they'll put him to bed at once . . .

THE GRANDFATHER. You are n't going to hurt him . . .

PASTEUR. No. No . . . indeed . . . Come . . . my child, come! . . . Help him. What? . . . You're afraid? . . . Oh! . . .

[*He holds out his arms, the child holds out his, and* PASTEUR *carries him to the next room.*]

THE GRANDFATHER. He's not going to hurt him . . .

STUDENT [*who just entered*]. He's going to save him for you!

THE GRANDFATHER. May the good Lord grant it . . .

PASTEUR [*reëntering*]. Stay with him, mind you! Some one's going to come and undress him! . . . Go in . . . [*The* GRANDFATHER *goes. On entering the* STUDENT *has put down a porcelain tray on which are all the articles necessary for the inoculation.* PASTEUR *to the* STUDENT.] You have everything there we need?

STUDENT. Yes, Master . . .

PASTEUR. You've notified the doctor?

STUDENT. Yes, Master . . .

PASTEUR. You told him that . . .

STUDENT. Yes, Master, and here he is!

PASTEUR [*to the* DOCTOR *entering*]. You know about it, my dear friend?

THE DOCTOR. Yes, what a moment this is! . . .

PASTEUR. Harrowing! . . .

THE DOCTOR. It's nevertheless what you've been waiting for! . . .

PASTEUR. I did n't hope for this! Of course, I really thought that some day the thing would happen and that they would bring a . . . but the idea that it would be a child never occurred to me! . . .

THE DOCTOR. You want me to make the inoculation at once?

PASTEUR. Yes! Yes, yes . . .

THE DOCTOR [*to the* STUDENT]. I can understand what his feeling must be . . . last night he used these very words: "*When I approach a child I am inspired with two sentiments . . . that of fondness for the present, that of respect for what he may one day be.*" So you think! . . .

PASTEUR. For just a minute I've been torn with intense anguish . . . I can't just express it! . . . Yes, I've been positive for months . . . I'm sure I've found it . . . But now, it's not a question of experiments . . . it's no longer a question of waiting to know whether I'm entirely right . . . I must be right, the life of a little boy is at stake . . . and I will not let you make the inoculation until you've given your word of honor that you're certain of the result!

THE DOCTOR. Very well, I give you my word of honor!

PASTEUR. Think it over . . had n't you better? Remember that I might kill him!

THE DOCTOR. But nevertheless . . . look . . . all your experiments . . .

PASTEUR. Let me repeat, they were only experiments! . . . For the last few minutes all the criticisms which have been made to me . . . and to which I would not listen . . . have all flashed before me very clearly.

THE DOCTOR. Let's see! Let's see! . . . When was he bitten?

PASTEUR. Last Thursday.

THE DOCTOR. Did they apply a red-hot iron?

PASTEUR. No, the doctor who sent him to me only cauterized with carbolic acid . . .

THE DOCTOR. It's certainly very serious!

PASTEUR. Why?

THE DOCTOR. How old is he?

PASTEUR. Nine . . .

THE DOCTOR. Poor little fellow! . . . I understand you perfectly . . . naturally, if he died! . . .

PASTEUR. Pardon . . . if he died I would n't be responsible! The dog that bit him was mad . . . and if I don't make the inoculation the child is certainly doomed to die, when you consider the seriousness of his wounds . . .

THE DOCTOR. Of course . . . Yes . . . an accident might occur . . . and if this child succumbs to his wounds!!! . . . .

PASTEUR. If I had died this morning, what would you do at this moment?

THE DOCTOR. . . .

PASTEUR. Ah! Ah! . . .

STUDENT. He saw him hesitate!

PASTEUR. So you, you, my co-worker, you have n't faith in me?

THE DOCTOR. You have n't faith in yourself! . . .

PASTEUR. What? . . .

THE DOCTOR. Well! . . .

PASTEUR. And I should be the cause of . . . ? No! indeed! above everything, let's have no misunderstanding . . . I'm asking your opinion . . . I'm not giving you mine! My own was formed long ago. I wanted to know yours! . . .

THE DOCTOR. And I immediately gave my word of honor!

PASTEUR. Certainly, certainly! . . . Come . . . Come! [*Preceded by the* STUDENT *who has taken the tray, the* DOCTOR *and* PASTEUR *enter the room where the child is. For a few minutes the stage is empty. One hears only the reassuring voice of the* DOCTOR *who is talking to the child. Then* PASTEUR *reappears.*] He was very much afraid, at first . . . but it did n't hurt him!

[*The* DOCTOR *and the* STUDENT *enter.*]

THE DOCTOR. And we won't know before . . .

PASTEUR. Fourteen days! . . .

THE DOCTOR. Would you like to have me remain with you? . . .

PASTEUR. No, my friend, thank you . . . I'm going to leave in five minutes myself . . .

THE DOCTOR. I'll see you tomorrow morning . . . then . . .

PASTEUR. Tomorrow . . . Thank you . . . Goodbye . . .

THE DOCTOR. Goodbye . . .

[*The* DOCTOR *goes out.*]

PASTEUR [*addressing the* STUDENT]. His grandfather ought not to be left with him above all things . . . it will only excite him more.

STUDENT. He's no longer in the room . . .

PASTEUR. Have some one find him a place for the night . . .

STUDENT. I saw to it, Master . . .

PASTEUR. Thanks! . . . I've kept you very late . . .

STUDENT. Oh! Master . . .

PASTEUR. I'm going to drop you off at your home. Put on your coat . . .

STUDENT. All right, Master. Thank you . . .

[*He goes out.* PASTEUR *puts on his overcoat and hat. Then he goes to the door of the room where the child is.*]

PASTEUR. You'll carry out my instructions carefully, won't you? I'll see you tomorrow morning! [*The* STUDENT *reënters.* PASTEUR *at his desk arranges some papers leisurely. He then takes two or three steps. Then:*] Listen, my son. [*He takes off his overcoat and hat.*] I could n't . . . You're going to my house . . . take my carriage . . . you'll tell Madame Pasteur what's happened . . . ask her to be good enough to excuse me . . . she'll understand why I'm

going to spend the night here . . . I'll see you tomorrow . . .

[PASTEUR, *left alone goes and listens at the door at the left, and then, as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

He starts pacing back and forth. It will last the whole night through.]

ACT IV

1888

Arbois. The scene represents the drawing-room of PASTEUR'S *paternal home. At the rise of the curtain the* STUDENT *is discovered. He is seated at a small table near* PASTEUR'S *desk, writing. Two large windows open on the sunny garden. A few minutes later the* DOCTOR *is shown in by the valet de chambre.*

THE DOCTOR. Good morning . . .

THE STUDENT. Oh! Good morning! Doctor . . . and may I say . . . at last! . . . I have been waiting for you so anxiously . . .

THE DOCTOR. Is he as ill as that?

THE STUDENT. Unfortunately! doctor, I'm afraid he's very ill . . .

THE DOCTOR. He's in bed? . . .

THE STUDENT. Oh, no! . . . He's in the garden with Madame Pasteur and the children . . .

THE DOCTOR. I received word from you day before yesterday . . . I could n't come any sooner! . . . Does Madame Pasteur know that you sent for me?

THE STUDENT. Yes, but she'll pretend she does n't know about it . . . if he happened to be displeased, I would take all the consequences myself!

THE DOCTOR. Besides, so he won't be, . . . I might find some pretext or other for my visit . . . or better still, so as not to spoil the effect, I can attribute it to the real anxiety which I've felt since our last meeting . . .

THE STUDENT. Yes, perhaps . . .

THE DOCTOR. I came of my own accord, that's all!

THE STUDENT. You found him changed, then?

THE DOCTOR. Yes! . . . He works a great deal too much . . . Think of it, here's a man who has n't taken a rest for fifty years! . . . He still has a laboratory, here?

THE STUDENT. He certainly has!

THE DOCTOR. Then, he must go away! . . . What's the good of a regimen, what's the good of medicine if he keeps on working!

THE STUDENT. The man is n't born who can make him give up his laboratory! . . . Nevertheless, please, do everything in the world you can, doctor . . .

THE DOCTOR. You know him as well as I do, don't you? Whether or not he'll take my advice depends on the mood he's in . . . I can't tell anything about it in advance. I can't even be prepared! . . . Pasteur is n't like a patient . . . and if I had to prescribe for him . . . I believe that, in spite of myself, I should first ask his advice! . . .

THE STUDENT. I thought, nevertheless, it was my duty to warn you!

THE DOCTOR. You did just right . . . I should like so much to be able to prolong such a life! . . .

THE STUDENT. I'll go and tell him that you've just come . . .

THE DOCTOR. Yes, but I prefer to see him alone.

THE STUDENT. Of course.

[*The* STUDENT *goes out towards the garden.*]

[*A moment later* PASTEUR *appears.*]

PASTEUR. No? . . . Oh! . . . How good of you to come and see your old friend . . . so far! . . . What a pleasant surprise! . . . You're going to stay with us several days, I hope . . . How are you? . . .

THE DOCTOR. How do you do, my great Master . . .

PASTEUR. Sit down! . . . Sit down, so that I can look at you awhile! . . . Why! Why! You're not looking very well.

THE DOCTOR. I'm tired . . .

PASTEUR. But you must n't let yourself get tired . . . you must n't do too much . . . you must n't go beyond your strength! . . . We all of us have a bad habit of putting off the rest we need till rather late! You see one must have some strength left to

be able to rest! . . . However, I'm sure that I shall be wiser than any of you, and that I shall stop when I ought to . . .

THE DOCTOR. H'm! Are you quite sure of it? . . . And whom will you consult when the time comes . . .

PASTEUR. You!

THE DOCTOR. And the day when I advise you to stop . . . to ease up a little on your work . . .

PASTEUR. I . . .

THE DOCTOR. Will you listen to me then?

PASTEUR. Why, yes . . .

THE DOCTOR. Even if I did n't wait until you asked my advice?

PASTEUR. Well, why not! . . .

THE DOCTOR. Even if I were to tell you so . . . to-day . . .

PASTEUR. To-day?

THE DOCTOR. Yes.

PASTEUR. Then it seems to you that . . .

THE DOCTOR. Yes . . .

PASTEUR. Really?

THE DOCTOR. Yes . . .

PASTEUR. Without examining me further.

THE DOCTOR. Yes . . .

PASTEUR. Is it very apparent?

THE DOCTOR. Yes . . .

PASTEUR. Serious?

THE DOCTOR. Yes . . .

PASTEUR. Very serious?

THE DOCTOR. I think . . .

PASTEUR. Ah! Ah! . . . I've changed a great deal?

THE DOCTOR. Yes!

PASTEUR. That's why you came?

THE DOCTOR. Yes . . .

PASTEUR. They've been worried about me?

THE DOCTOR. Yes! . . . You have something under way . . .

PASTEUR. Yes . . .

THE DOCTOR. Important?

PASTEUR. Very . . . epilepsy!

THE DOCTOR. Ah . . .

PASTEUR. I might say that it's pretty well along, and that Roux will be able to go on with it alone admirably, if I have to go . . . still I should have preferred! . . . The question which arises is this . . . at the present moment am I in a condition to make a final effort which will be effective . . . or had I better take a little rest . . . with the distinct understanding that the rest is likely to be beneficial? . . . You understand me, don't you . . . if it means the end I'd much rather give a last pull in the harness, right away! . . . It would be heart-breaking to be obliged to take a rest that's unnecessary! Consider carefully! . . . You must n't, out of friendship, make me lose any time, if my days are numbered! . . . That would be doing me a very ill turn; pay close attention to what you say! If it's a question of days, I shall go back to Paris this evening, I shall shut myself in my laboratory and never come out of it again . . . if it's a question of months . . . I'm quite willing to rest for three weeks . . . you understand?

THE DOCTOR. Why, I think it's a question of years, Pasteur, if you rest . . .

PASTEUR. Years?

THE DOCTOR. Yes . . .

PASTEUR. Well, then, my friend, I've plenty of time! . . . You know, you frightened me . . . and I trembled for epilepsy! Years . . . why, that's longer than I need! Think of it . . . I need six months . . . and if I have several years to live after that . . . I don't know what I shall do with them! . . .

THE DOCTOR. Oh! I'm not worried at all! . . .

PASTEUR. But you did quite right to come, and it was very good of you to have put yourself out! . . . If that's the case all I have to do is to remain here quietly . . .

THE DOCTOR. Oh, not at all . . .

PASTEUR. Why?

THE DOCTOR. On account of your laboratory . . .

PASTEUR. I won't set foot inside it . . .

THE DOCTOR. I defy you not to do it . . .

PASTEUR. I'm going to lock it . . . and give you the key . . .

THE DOCTOR. Some night you'd break down the door! . . . No. No, no! . . . And besides the air here in the Jura does n't do you any good just now . . .

PASTEUR. Where would you have me go?

THE DOCTOR. To the Riviera . . .

PASTEUR. Ouch! . . .

THE DOCTOR. Yes . . .

PASTEUR. But where?

THE DOCTOR. To Bordighera . . .

PASTEUR. Oh! Oh! . . . That's very far . . .

THE DOCTOR. Precisely! . . .

PASTEUR. Now, listen . . . I'm going to think it over . . . I'll see . . .

THE DOCTOR. You must do it! . . .

PASTEUR. That's only a good reason! . . . At any rate, I'll think it over . . . and perhaps the idea of taking them all there will settle it . . . for it would do them good and give them pleasure! . . . I'll give you my answer tomorrow! . . . Thanks, my good friend, for thinking so much of me . . . for I'm not worth it . . . for I must tell you something . . . you're going to have a complaint to lodge against me . . . for I must tell you that since I've been here I've practiced medicine in a most illegal fashion! Would you believe that my neighbors here in the country don't know me very well, and they think I'm a physician! Just this morning a good man came to consult me because he had pains in his stomach . . . and I assure you that I was greatly embarrassed . . . However, I advised him to take some bi-carbonate of soda . . . I think that can't do him any harm?

THE DOCTOR. Oh, no . . .

PASTEUR. If they ever found out here in the country that I'm not a physician . . . I'm quite sure they would take me for a charlatan! In fact . . . that almost happened to me in the Academy of Medicine . . . once!

THE DOCTOR. How they must regret it today!

PASTEUR. They regret it? Never! Anyway, I've gotten used to it; it would n't have been so easy if I'd been all alone . . . but in the end I've gotten used to it . . . and I never get angry any more, now! As long as I had n't attained my end, their malice made me indignant . . . but at present, naturally it does n't bother me! I've been so rewarded for my efforts . . . that sometimes I'm ashamed in the presence of those who fought me so! . . . It's unbelievable how uncompromising I was with them . . . and I used to call them names when they would n't try to understand . . . I don't dare show myself nowadays. Besides, I don't want to show myself anywhere. I've been seen too much . . . they've done enough for me as it is . . . it's over!

THE DOCTOR. France has not yet finished with you . . .

PASTEUR. You're greedy!

THE DOCTOR. Greedy for justice, yes! . . .

PASTEUR. For goodness' sake, what more would you have them do? . . . Why not a statue! Remember that I belong to all the academies of the whole world . . . and I believe that I have all the decorations there are . . . excepting one . . . obviously!

THE DOCTOR. Which is that?

PASTEUR. The Royal Order of Prussia. I've just refused it a second time! . . . Alsace is a question of humanity with me . . . they have torn it away from me . . . and they no longer exist as far as I'm concerned . . .

VALET DE CHAMBRE [*entering*]. There's a little boy who wishes to speak to you, monsieur . . .

PASTEUR. Have him come in! [*The* VALET DE CHAMBRE *goes out.*] It's doubtless some little country lad who probably has a cold! . . . you'll look after this one yourself, won't you . . . eh?

THE DOCTOR. Yes . . .

[JOSEPH MEISTER *appears at this moment.*]

JOSEPH MEISTER. Good morning, Monsieur Pasteur! . . .

PASTEUR. Come a little nearer, little boy. I can't see you well . . . [*The child takes a few steps.*] But . . . you're all right? . . .

JOSEPH MEISTER. I'm the Meister boy! . . .

PASTEUR. Oh! My boy . . . Come here . . . Quick . . . come here . . . so I can look at you . . . come here . . . you're not ill, I hope? . . .

JOSEPH MEISTER. Oh, no, Monsieur Pasteur, quite the contrary . . . it's because I'm very well that I came . . .

PASTEUR. Oh! That's fine . . . how good of you to come to see me! You came to show me how well you are, did n't you?

JOSEPH MEISTER. Why, yes, Monsieur Pasteur . . .

PASTEUR. That's my little boy . . . you remember . . . the first . . . that I saved! . . . And you're getting along nicely, are n't you?

JOSEPH MEISTER. Oh! yes, Monsieur Pasteur . . .

PASTEUR. And you're never, never ill, any more, are you?

JOSEPH MEISTER. Oh! Never . . .

PASTEUR. That's fine! . . . Let me see your hands . . . You can hardly see anything any more now . . . that's first-rate! . . . He was so sick, the poor little man . . . and he was so brave! . . . Do you remember when you played with the rabbits back there? . . . He knew that I had to kill them . . . and often he'd ask me to spare them . . . and I always did as he asked me! . . . You're a big boy, now . . . I hope! Do you go to school?

JOSEPH MEISTER. Yes, Monsieur Pasteur . . .

PASTEUR. You must go, you know . . . and besides you must work hard! It's good to work hard! . . . you'll see! . . . You must get to be a very intelligent little boy . . . You must really be an honor to me . . . you owe me that much, don't you? . . . Do you know what you owe me?

JOSEPH MEISTER. My mama told me that I owed my life to you! . . .

PASTEUR. How beautiful these words are from those little lips! . . . Is n't it beautiful to hear those words? . . . This little child owes his life to me! . . . If he were an orphan, I would never be separated from him! . . . His little life is even more precious to me than if I had given it to him . . . because he trusted it to me under the most dreadful circumstances . . . and I was able to give it back to him.

THE DOCTOR. I appreciate your feeling, Pasteur . . .

PASTEUR. It's beyond words, my friend! . . . Oh! How nice of you to come to see me, my dear . . . You're a dear little fellow to do that . . . and you must thank your mama for me! . . . What's that book you have under your arm?

JOSEPH MEISTER. It's my prize for this year . . .

PASTEUR. His prize! . . . You got a prize!!!

JOSEPH MEISTER. It was to show it to you that I came! . . .

PASTEUR. And just to think he does n't realize what he's doing for me! . . . First show me your lovely sparkling eyes . . . look straight at me . . . look into my eyes . . . and tell me that you're never in pain . . . never . . .

JOSEPH MEISTER. Never . . . Never . . .

PASTEUR. Thanks, thanks, thanks! I love you!

[*He kisses him and for an instant holds him close in his arms. Then the* STUDENT *appears.*]

THE DOCTOR. It's the little Meister boy . . .

THE STUDENT. Ah! . . .

PASTEUR. You must tell Madame Pasteur that the child is here . . . and that I want a lunch prepared for him . . . a good lunch . . . do you like chocolate?

JOSEPH MEISTER. Yes, Monsieur Pasteur . . .

PASTEUR. Have some made right away . . .

THE STUDENT. I'll see to it, Master . . .

[*He goes out.*]

PASTEUR [*to the* DOCTOR]. My friend, just now I'm going through a wonderful experience! . . . This little fellow's visit has done me more good than you can ever imagine! . . . He's a fine little lad, is n't he?

THE DOCTOR. Yes, indeed . . .

PASTEUR. I have never seen a handsomer boy myself! . . . You're going to look after me all right, are n't you? I shall do everything you tell me to do . . . I want to live . . . I want to live a little longer . . . I should like to save others . . . Oh! If I could only save them all! . . . If I must go tomorrow, I'll go tomorrow . . . tell Madame Pasteur so . . . let her know that I've become submissive . . . and that on the Riviera I shan't work . . . that I'll rest . . . and tell her that I'll come right away . . .

but I would like to be alone with the little lad a moment longer . . .

THE DOCTOR. I'm going . . . I'm going to tell her the good news. [*He goes out.*]

PASTEUR. Come over here, dear, near to me . . . and now show me your prize . . . Oh! What a lovely book . . . Robinson Crusoe! It is a very fine book. Ah! I see you won first prize in arithmetic . . . that's fine and I want to congratulate you. See, here's something for you, . . .

[*He takes from his pocketbook a hundred franc note which he gives him.*]

JOSEPH MEISTER. Oh . . .

PASTEUR. It's for you and your mama . . . sit here on my knee . . . so! . . . and now, do you want to do something nice for me . . . if it is n't asking too much . . . show me how you can read . . .

JOSEPH MEISTER [*reading*]. "*One day a great ship was . . . wrecked*" . . .

PASTEUR. Yes . . .

JOSEPH MEISTER [*continuing*]. "*and was . . . swallowed up by the waves.*"

PASTEUR. Very good! You read right along . . . That's fine! . . . and write . . . Do you know how to write?

JOSEPH MEISTER. Yes.

PASTEUR. You like to write?

JOSEPH MEISTER. Yes . . .

PASTEUR. You ought to like it very much . . . and you must learn to write very well . . . so as to be able to write to me . . . You would n't mind writing to me?

JOSEPH MEISTER. I'd like to, Monsieur Pasteur . . .

PASTEUR. You must be able to let me hear from you . . . h'm . . .

JOSEPH MEISTER. Yes, Monsieur Pasteur . . .

PASTEUR. Here . . . wait a minute . . . I'm going to address an envelope, wait . . . here it is. "Monsieur Louis Pasteur. Arbois, near Poligny, Jura." And now, down at the bottom you put, "Please forward," like that . . . here it is! . . . you see . . . you can do the rest yourself by copying this one . . . and every month you'll let me hear from you . . . won't you? It's a promise? . . . You know that I'll be looking for them . . .

JOSEPH MEISTER. Yes, Monsieur Pasteur . . .

PASTEUR. Here they are, take them . . . six sheets and six envelopes . . . now I'll always be able to hear from you . . .

JOSEPH MEISTER. What, always . . . with six envelopes?

PASTEUR. You'd like more?

JOSEPH MEISTER. Oh! yes . . .

PASTEUR. You want the whole box?

JOSEPH MEISTER. Well . . . Yes . . .

PASTEUR. Perhaps that's a good many . . . after all! . . . If the last ones come back to you, you must n't be angry with me!

JOSEPH MEISTER. It will be because you've gone away . . .

PASTEUR. Yes . . .

JOSEPH MEISTER. Where?

PASTEUR. Where I did n't want you to go!

JOSEPH MEISTER. Why not?

PASTEUR. Because it's not the place for children!

THE VALET DE CHAMBRE [*entering*]. The chocolate's ready, sir! . . .

PASTEUR. We're coming! . . . come . . . come and show Madame Pasteur your prize . . . come . . . [*He takes the child by the hand, and speaking to persons who are in the garden, he says:*] Let me introduce my little doctor . . .

and

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT V

DECEMBER 27, 1892.

The scene represents the hall outside of the amphitheatre at the Sorbonne. On this day PASTEUR *is seventy years old. He is surrounded by men who regard him with awe and respect. He is in an armchair, the rest are standing. One cannot hear all that the group are saying to him, but one can hear him saying constantly,* "Thanks! Thanks! Thanks!"

THE DOCTOR. What are they waiting for?

THE STUDENT. They're waiting until the crowd is seated before having him go in . . .

THE DOCTOR. Has the President of the Republic arrived?

THE STUDENT. Not yet.

THE DOCTOR. He's supposed to, is n't he?

THE STUDENT. So it seems . . .

[*The* DOCTOR *goes up stage and exits.*]

PASTEUR. My dear friend . . . ?

THE STUDENT. Master . . .

PASTEUR. I'd like to know just what's going to happen . . .

THE STUDENT. I've no idea, Master . . .

PASTEUR. There are a lot of people . . . ?

THE STUDENT. Yes, Master, a great many; the whole of the amphitheatre of the Sorbonne is packed . . .

PASTEUR. Oh! Why . . . who's there?

THE STUDENT. Master, there are [*taking the programme from his pocket and reading*] the delegates from the Academies of France and of foreign countries . . . all the members of the Institute, all the University professors, deputations from the Normal College, from the Polytechnic, from the Central College, from the Colleges of Pharmacy and Agriculture . . . the President of the Council, the President of the House of Representatives; the President of the Senate . . . all the Ministers, all the Ambassadors . . .

PASTEUR. Oh . . . It's too much . . . Why . . . ?

THE STUDENT. The classes of rhetoric and philosophy from all the colleges of Paris . . .

PASTEUR. Boys . . . Ah! That's fine! [*Applause is heard.*] Who's just entered?

THE STUDENT. Who's just entered?

A PHYSICIAN. Lister!

THE STUDENT. It's Lister . . .

PASTEUR. What, Lister came . . . At his age! . . . It's too much! . . . It's too much! . . .

THE STUDENT. Master . . . I found a letter for you at the Institute this morning; it was addressed to Arbois . . . Do you want me to keep it and give it to you this evening . . .

PASTEUR. No, no . . . Give it here . . . [*The* STUDENT *gives it to him.* PASTEUR *having opened it and glanced through it.*] Oh . . . it's from my little boy . . . it's from little Meister . . . and it's a very nice letter . . . very well written . . . very . . . and they are new envelopes . . . it's paper which he bought himself!

THE DOCTOR [*coming from the background and going up to* PASTEUR]. Pasteur, I can't tell you what I feel . . . Something wonderful is going to happen in a moment! . . . You're going to see the whole world standing before you proclaiming "Thanks" . . . I know the state of your health . . . and I wished to prepare you somewhat! . . . If you have had to strive . . . if, at times, you've met opposition . . . if often you've had to complain of a constant and reprehensible indifference . . . you are to reap, in a few minutes, the wonderful harvest of your magnificent work! . . . The people out there for several months have been preparing the way to immortality. All that human beings can do, once they understand . . . they have done . . . without reservation, without compulsion . . . with all their heart! Each according to his knowledge, according to his ability . . . brings to you this day the tribute of his gratitude!

PASTEUR. Oh! . . . Thank you, my friend, thank you . . . but I'd like to know exactly what's going to take place . . .

THE DOCTOR. Very well! It's this . . . The President of the Academy of Science will present you with a medal commemorating this never-to-be-forgotten day . . .

PASTEUR. Ah! . . .

THE DOCTOR. The President of the Municipal Council will bring you an address from the Council . . .

PASTEUR. Ah! . . .

THE DOCTOR. One of the students of the Veterinary School of Alfort will present you with its medal . . .

PASTEUR. Ah! . . .

THE DOCTOR. You will be presented with an album containing the signatures of all the residents of Arbois, then the Mayor of Dôle will hand you the facsimile of your birth certificate and a photograph of your birthplace . . .

PASTEUR. Ah! . . .

THE DOCTOR. The Governor General of Algeria will inform you that he is naming

a village in the province of Constantine after you . . .

PASTEUR. Ah! . . . They ought to have told me all this . . . beforehand . . . then I could have spoken of it in my address . . . I can't now! . . . Besides, I know very well that I shan't be able to deliver it myself . . . I shan't be able . . . it's necessary that . . . where's my son?

THE DOCTOR. He's right near . . .

PASTEUR. Hand him my address . . . here it is . . . take it . . . let *him* read it . . . they'll understand, won't they . . . that a man can't . . . stand up under all this . . . h'm?

THE DOCTOR. Why, yes; why, yes! . . .

PASTEUR. And you can easily see that it's too much since I can't stand it!

[*The* PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC *has just come in followed by several people.*]

THE STUDENT [*announcing*]. The President of the Republic . . .

[PASTEUR *makes an effort to rise, but the* PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC *comes to him so quickly that he has n't time to do so.*]

THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC. I don't want to enter the hall without you, Monsieur Pasteur . . . because it is not I for whom they are waiting . . . and I've come to get you. I wish, before any one else does, to express to you, in the name of your country, the eternal gratitude which is due you. By your genius, you have saved human life . . . from the most terrible ills . . . France, and the whole world, bring to you today the testimony of their respect and of their veneration. The noblest and choicest words are all too feeble, Monsieur Pasteur, and seem poor indeed . . . when used in connection with you! You are a great man when you might have contented yourself with being a great scientist. Your life will be an inspiration . . . and from the bottom of my heart I hope that it may be prolonged a great while so that you may witness the inestimable benefits of your wonderful discoveries. Already thousands and thousands would be dead but for you . . . and that's why we're so moved in your presence! You have reproached us often for not having enough veneration for great men . . . you have counseled us to honor especially those who, in science, in letters and in art have contributed greatly to the glory of their country . . . and I'm happy today to be able to follow your advice . . . I'm happy and proud to be able to say these things to you! . . . Will you permit me, Monsieur Pasteur, to embrace you in the name of France?

[PASTEUR *is now standing and the* PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC *gives him the accolade. Then, in the profound silence which follows,* PASTEUR *says:*]

PASTEUR. *And I firmly believe that science and peace will triumph over ignorance and war and that nations will combine, not to destroy but to build up.*

[*The* PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC *respectfully offers* PASTEUR *his arm, and the two move towards the door which opens into the great amphitheatre of the Sorbonne. As they cross the threshold, the* Marseillaise *bursts forth while at the same time a mighty shout is heard:*]

LONG LIVE PASTEUR!

"MORAL"

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

By LUDWIG THOMA

Translated by CHARLES RECHT

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PERSONS OF THE PLAY

Fritz Beermann, *a wealthy landowner and banker*
Lena Beermann, *his wife*
Effie Beermann, *their daughter*
Kommerzienrat Adolph Bolland, *capitalist and manufacturer*
Clara Bolland, *his wife*
Dr. Hauser, *an ex-judge*
Frau Lund, *an old lady*
Hans Jacob Dobler, *a poet*
Fräulein Koch-Pinneberg, *an artiste*
Privatdozent Dr. Wasner, *a gymnasium professor*
Freiherr von Simbach, *the Police Commissioner of the Duchy*
Assessor Oscar Stroebel, *a police official*
Madame Ninon de Hauteville, *a lady of leisure*
Freiherr General Botho von Schmettau, *also known as Zurnberg. A Gentleman-in-waiting and Adjutant to His Highness, the Duke*
Joseph Reisacher, *a clerk of the Police Department*
Betty, *a maid at Beermann's*
Two man-servants and a policeman

THE PRESUMPTION

The esteemed, sensitive public will assume that the action takes place in Emilsburg, the capital of the Duchy of Gerlestein. The first and third acts occur in the house of HERR FRITZ BEERMANN; *the second act, in the Police Headquarters. It all happens between Sunday afternoon and Monday evening.*

To be free from blame, the producers will please note that:

BEERMANN is in the fifties; jovial; lively; with gray side-whiskers and chin carefully shaved.

FRAU BEERMANN is in the late forties, though youthful looking for her age.

FRAU LUND, sixty-eight; a woman of impressive appearance; her manner is energetic; her mass of white hair is carefully coiffured.

FRAU BOLLAND, about forty-five; stout; talkative.

DR. WASNER, a tall German professor with full blond beard; deep-voiced; wears pince-nez with black tortoise-shell rim and broad black cord.

HANS JACOB DOBLER is a poet; he is dressed in a poor-fitting cut-away coat; unkempt mustache and Van Dyke beard.

FRÄULEIN PINNEBERG, a feminist, wears a loose-fitting gown.

DR. HAUSER, fifty; smooth-shaven; wears gold-rimmed spectacles.

VON SCHMETTAU, sixty; remains stately looking with effort; military bearing.

MADAME DE HAUTEVILLE; indefinitely twenty; her ultra-fashionable Parisian gowns invite the cloak and suit patrons.

"MORAL"

ACT I

FURTHER APOLOGY

Card room in BEERMANN'S *house. In the background a swinging door opens into the dining room. To the right a smaller door leads to the music room. On the left side another door opens into the entrance hall. To left up stage in a corner a small card table with chairs. To right up stage a large sofa and comfortable chairs. Parallel to background down stage, tea table with coffee service thereon; near it to right, smaller table, on it a humidor.*

A butler is engaged at the tea table, another man-servant is holding swinging door open. [*Business of getting up from table.*] *Many voices and rattle of chairs are heard from dining room. Through swinging doors enter* BOLLAND *and* FRAU BEERMANN, BEERMANN *with* FRAU BOLLAND, DR. HAUSER *with* EFFIE, DR. WASNER *with* FRÄULEIN KOCH-PINNEBERG, DOBLER *alone.*

General greeting of "Mahlzeit."

DR. WASNER *is vigorously shaking hands — going to* FRAU BEERMANN *says, "Ich wünsche Gesegnete Mahlzeit."*

The servants pass around coffee — BEERMANN *conversing with* BOLLAND *comes down stage . . .*

BOLLAND. You will receive two thousand votes more than the Socialists. That's certain.

BEERMANN [*skeptical*]. No, — no.

BOLLAND. If all the Liberals combine with the Conservatives, the result cannot be in doubt.

BEERMANN [*taking coffee from the servant*]. If . . .

BOLLAND. Fusion is here. It's the logical development. I am an old politician. The time for discussion is over. Now it's a straight fight to a finish.

DR. WASNER [*coming nearer*]. The German fatherland is rallying to the support of the national flag.

BEERMANN. But there are controversies everywhere. I know best. I always am told by campaign managers: don't say this and don't say that.

BOLLAND. In what way?

BEERMANN. For instance, I'm to speak at the Liberal Club the day after to-morrow. You would not expect me to say the same things I told the Conservatives last night . . . ?

BOLLAND. Your details, of course, must differ. But fundamentally it amounts to the same thing.

BEERMANN. The same thing? Believe me, all this masking confuses me. [*Drinks.*]

EFFIE [*calling across the tea table where she has been standing with others*]. Papa! Listen to Frau Bolland. She also says that the Indian Dancer is so interesting.

FRAU BOLLAND. Positively won—derful, Herr Beermann! You can conceive the entire spirit of the Orient.

EFFIE. Why have n't we gone to see her?

FRAU BOLLAND. You surely ought to go. Professor Stohr — you know him — told me he never in his life saw anything so gorgeous.

FRÄULEIN KOCH-PINNEBERG. She's so picturesque in her greenish gowns.

FRAU BOLLAND. I did not know that the Hindoos could be so charming.

BEERMANN. We'll have a look at her some night.

EFFIE. But to-morrow night is her last appearance.

BEERMANN [*going to the humidor*]. Very well, darling. Will you remind me of it to-morrow? [*Taking a box of cigars offers one to* DOBLER *who is standing near him.*] Smoke?

DOBLER [*taking one*]. Thanks. But I am not accustomed to the imported ones.

BEERMANN [*patronizingly*]. You'll get used to high living soon enough.

BOLLAND [*to* DOBLER]. How long have you been in the city now?

DOBLER. Two years.

BOLLAND. And before that you were in . . . eh?

FRAU BOLLAND. You must excuse him, Herr Dobler. Why, in Unterschlettenbach, dear . . . You know that!

BOLLAND [*correcting himself*]. Certainly. Bit of literary history. Mighty interesting place that Unterschlettenbach . . . eh?

DOBLER. Hardly, Herr Kommerzienrat. Poor and unsanitary. Most of its inhabitants are miners.

BOLLAND. Fancy that! And I never knew it. Full of miners! Tell me, though, what do you think of our set here . . . ? How do you like this well-to-do circle . . . the big city . . . wealthy surroundings?

DOBLER [*lighting a cigar*]. I like it well enough. But I think I shall always feel out of place here.

BOLLAND. Can't get used to it?

DOBLER. Everything is so different. It seems to me at times as though I had suddenly entered a beautiful house while outdoors my old comrade was awaiting me patiently — the open road.

FRAU BOLLAND. Is n't that won—derful? So very re-a-lis-tic-ally put! I can just picture it. Oh, Herr Dobler . . . I must tell you: your novel — my husband and I talk about it all day long.

BOLLAND. Tell me, though — did you yourself experience the life of that young man you describe?

DOBLER. It's the story of my youth.

BOLLAND. But it's somewhat colored by poetic imagination?

DOBLER. N—o.

BOLLAND. For instance, you have never actually starved?

DOBLER. Oh, yes. There's no imagination in that.

BOLLAND. Just the way you describe it — so that everything turned red?

DOBLER. Everything had a pink color. On one occasion I did not eat anything for four and one-half days.

FRAU BEERMANN [*compassionately*]. You poor thing!

FRAU BOLLAND. That's exceedingly interesting!

BOLLAND. Do tell us all about it! Then you saw dancing fires?

DOBLER. Yes. Everything danced before my eyes, and I saw it all through a hazy veil, and towards the end my hearing was affected.

BOLLAND. You don't say so? Your hearing also?

DOBLER. When anyone spoke to me it sounded as if he stood a great distance off — a great distance.

FRAU BOLLAND. Our set never dreams of such things.

BEERMANN. How did it all turn out?

DOBLER. What do you mean?

BEERMANN. Well, in the end you got something to eat again?

DOBLER. Finally I fainted; I was found lying in a meadow, and was taken to the hospital.

FRAU BEERMANN [*sighing*]. Are such things still possible in our day?

FRAU BOLLAND. What can you expect — of these idealists!

DR. HAUSER. They deserve nothing better.

BEERMANN. And after you were in the hospital — how did you get out?

DOBLER. As soon as I got stronger. Later on I became a printer — found a position — studied, and published my book.

BEERMANN. That's all in your novel, I know. But the part where you describe how you were a tramp — that's not true?

DOBLER. Yes, I "hoboed" almost a whole year.

FRAU BOLLAND. "Hoboed"! Fancy that! How unique!

FRÄULEIN KOCH-PINNEBERG. I can just picture it. Tramping along the railroad tracks.

DOBLER. Yes. You folks think you can picture it with four square meals a day. But it's quite different, I assure you. There were three of us at that time. We worked our way from Basel upwards — sometimes

on the left — sometimes on the right bank of the Rhine. In Worms we spent the last of our money and we had to *peddle* for *hand-outs*.

FRAU BOLLAND [*not understanding him*]. "Hand-outs"? What is that?

DOBLER [*with pathos*]. To beg for something to eat, gnädige Frau, for our daily bread.

[*They all remain silent. Only the voice of the butler who is serving liqueur can be heard:* "Cognac, monsieur! Chartreuse! Champagne?"]

BEERMANN [*taking a glass*]. To a man of refinement, such an existence must have been quite unbearable.

DOBLER [*taking a glass of cognac from the butler*]. Unpleasant. [*Drinking.*] But you lose your sensitiveness. At first it is hard — but one learns. In one hot day on the road . . . when you get fagged out — and with every stone hurting your feet — you'll learn. The dust blinds you — but you've got to go on just the same. In the evening you come to a small hamlet with smoke curling above the house-tops and the houses themselves look cozy — then you have to hold your hat in your hand and beg for a plate of warm soup.

[*A short pause.*]

DR. WASNER [*deep bass voice*]. Home, sweet home!

BOLLAND. The story reminds me exactly of my late father.

FRAU BOLLAND. But, Adolph!

BOLLAND. Indeed, I say it does!

FRAU BOLLAND. How can you draw such a comparison? Herr Dobler has become a celebrated poet.

BOLLAND. My father also achieved something in life. At his funeral four hundred employees followed the coffin.

FRAU BOLLAND [*impatiently*]. We've heard that before . . . Herr Dobler, did you write poetry in those days?

DOBLER. No, Frau Bolland. Much later.

FRAU BOLLAND. I'll have to read your novel all over again, now that I know it is all autobiographical.

FRAU BEERMANN [*to* DR. WASNER]. You were going to sing, Herr Professor?

DR. WASNER. I promised . . .

FRAU BEERMANN. Yes, do; Effie will accompany you.

DR. WASNER. If Fräulein will be so kind . . . but I don't know how my voice is to-day . . .

FRAU BOLLAND. You sing so beauti—ful—ly.

DR. WASNER. So much campaign work. Politics corrupts even the voice.

FRÄULEIN KOCH-PINNEBERG. Do oblige us.

[FRAU BOLLAND, FRAU BEERMANN, DR. WASNER, FRÄULEIN KOCH, EFFIE *go out into the music room.*]

BEERMANN. It's a pity that the professor is going to sing. We could have started a game of skat. Have some more cognac?

DR. HAUSER. No, thanks.

DOBLER. Thanks. No more for me.

[BOLLAND *seats himself on sofa;* DR. HAUSER *and* DOBLER *sit in chairs;* BEERMANN *lights a fresh cigar. The butler goes into the music room and as he opens the door, the sound of the piano is heard.*]

BOLLAND. As I said before, Herr Dobler, your story reminded me very much of my late father.

DR. HAUSER. Of the well known Kommerzienrat Bolland?

BOLLAND [*sinks deep into chair; crosses legs*]. Never mind, he was not always a wealthy Kommerzienrat. [*Turning to* DOBLER.] Picture to yourself a winter landscape — it's bitter cold — a gray sky — it is snowing and everything is wrapped in snow. Through all this we see a youth walking — rather staggering — along the forest road from Perleberg. A half-starved young man.

[*He pauses and brushes ashes from his cigar. The butler enters from the music room to get a glass of water; then he goes out again. While the door is open, the trembling bass baritone voice of* PROF. WASNER *is heard.*]

"In deinen Augen hab ich einst gelesen

Von Lieb' und — Glück — von Lieb'
Und Glück den Schein. . . ." [1]

[*The door closes and the sound is shut off.*]

BOLLAND [*now continues his speech*]. And now the snow falls faster and faster. This poor young man had *par tout* nothing to eat since the morning. He becomes very weak; sits down on a bundle of twigs and falls asleep. Just by sheer chance it happens that a man from Perleberg passing by sees this dejected, snowed-in figure and takes the young fellow home with him. [*He pauses.*] And this young man later became my father . . .

HAUSER. And Herr Kommerzienrat Bolland.

BOLLAND. Yes. Herr Kommerzienrat Bolland. [*To* DOBLER.] Now don't you consider it quite remarkable? Would n't that make a fine novel?

DOBLER. Yes . . . Yes.

BOLLAND. That could be worked up very nicely, could n't it? A poor young man — the snow-covered landscape . . .

HAUSER. And that bundle of twigs.

DOBLER. Fortune has her unique whims and likes to turn the tables.

BOLLAND. That's it exactly. Fortune delights in turning the tables.

HAUSER. Unique whims? No. That sort of thing happens every day.

BOLLAND. What happens every day?

HAUSER. The story of a poor young man who becomes a millionaire. Every large factory boasts of a like progenitor.

BOLLAND. Do you think so?

HAUSER. And the poor young man grows poorer with each telling. Your son, Herr Bolland, in his description will have his grandfather freeze to death on the bundle of twigs.

BOLLAND. Upon my word the story is gospel. [*To* DOBLER.] I'd make use of that plot . . . How he founded his business and how it grew and grew . . .

[*As* FRAU BEERMANN *enters from the music room, the tremulous voice of* PROF. WASNER *is heard.*]

"Behüt dich Gott, es hat nicht sollen sein." [1]

[*The closing of the door shuts off the sound.*]

DOBLER. In one respect you are right. The character of the *self-made man* [2] has hardly been treated in contemporary German literature.

BOLLAND [*with enthusiasm*]. That 's just what I claim. Always about the poor people only. But take a man who has a large income — one who makes a success of his business, that also is poetry.

HAUSER. I'd have my ledger novelized, if I were you, Bolland.

[*A maid opens door, admitting* FRAU LUND.]

FRAU BEERMANN [*welcoming* FRAU LUND]. Mama Lund, how good of you.

FRAU LUND [*vivaciously*]. Always glad to come here. Good afternoon, gentlemen. Where is my little Effie?

FRAU BEERMANN. In the music room. [*To the maid.*] Please tell my daughter . . .

FRAU LUND. No, no, don't disturb her.

BEERMANN. Permit me. [*Introducing.*] . . . Herr Hans Jacob Dobler, our famous poet . . .

FRAU LUND [*taking his hand*]. A famous poet? Delighted.

BOLLAND. Author of "Life Story of Hans" . . .

FRAU LUND [*pleasantly to* DOBLER]. If I were younger, Herr Dobler, I would certainly make believe that I read your book. But at my age I find that sort of thing too tiresome. What is the "Life Story of Hans"?

DOBLER. It is a novel, gnädige Frau.

BOLLAND. A masterpiece.

FRAU LUND. Then my ignorance is unpardonable. I'll soon make reparation.

[FRAU BOLLAND *followed by* EFFIE, DR. WASNER *and* FRÄULEIN KOCH *hurry out of the music room.*]

FRAU BOLLAND. I am off for the Arts

[1] (Translated:)
"In thy dear eyes I once read the story
Of Love and Joy — of Love
And Joy agleam. . . ."

[1] God guard thee well, it was but a dream.
[2] So in original.

Club. I'll be late, I fear. [*To* FRAU LUND.] Oh, how do you do, Frau Lund?

EFFIE [*hurries over to* FRAU LUND *and kisses her hand*]. Mama Lund!

FRAU LUND. How is my little mischief-maker? When are you coming to see me?

EFFIE. I would gladly come . . . but, I am so busy with music lessons and Professor Stohr's lectures . . .

FRAU LUND. And this and that and your eighteen years. You are quite right, my dear.

FRAU BOLLAND [*to* FRAU BEERMANN]. May Effie come along? They say there are very won-der-ful paintings at the Arts Club.

FRAU BEERMANN [*turning to* FRAU LUND]. I don't know if . . .

FRAU LUND. Of course, let her go along. She has such a pretty little dress. Why should she be here with us old people? The gentlemen will entertain us . . .

FRAU BOLLAND. But then we'll have to hurry. It is quite late. Good-bye, Frau Beermann. I enjoyed myself so much. Good-bye, my dear Frau Lund. So glad to have seen you again. Good-bye, good-bye . . . Adolph!

BOLLAND. Yes, Mother.

FRAU BOLLAND. You won't forget the theater to-night? At eight. The Viennese actor is so fine.

[*Off to left. Followed by* EFFIE *and* FRÄULEIN KOCH. FRAU BOLLAND *in the doorway.*]

FRAU BOLLAND. Will you come with us, Herr Dobler. You can explain so many things.

DOBLER. I'll be glad to.

[*Shaking hands with* FRAU BEERMANN *and bowing.*]

BEERMANN. Come soon again, Herr Poet.

BOLLAND. And think over the story I told you.

[DOBLER *goes out left, following* FRAU BOLLAND, EFFIE, *and* FRÄULEIN KOCH.]

FRAU LUND [*to* FRAU BEERMANN]. I'll just have a cup of coffee.

FRAU BEERMANN. I'll tell them to make a fresh cup for you. A fresh cup of coffee. [*To the butler who is clearing the table.*] Tell the chef —

[*Butler goes out through the middle door. In the meantime* FRAU BOLLAND *again appears through left.*]

FRAU BOLLAND. Adolph!

BOLLAND. Yes — wifey?

FRAU BOLLAND. Thursday the circus comes to town, don't forget to reserve seats.

BOLLAND. All right!

FRAU BOLLAND [*while going out*]. I'm still a child when the circus comes.

[FRAU LUND *seats herself on sofa. Next to her on the right* FRAU BEERMANN; BEERMANN *and* BOLLAND *sit opposite in large leather chairs.* HAUSER *is standing behind the sofa leaning against it.*]

FRAU LUND [*to* HAUSER]. Tell me, Judge, where have you been keeping yourself all this time?

HAUSER. In my office, Frau Lund, only in my office. But I hear that you were on the Riviera.

FRAU LUND. Four weeks in Monte Carlo. Children, I gambled like an old *viveur*.

BEERMANN. What luck?

FRAU LUND. I lost, of course — I'm too old to set the world on fire. But, Beermann, I hear all sorts of surprises about you. You are a candidate for the Reichstag?

BEERMANN. Yes, they nominated me.

FRAU LUND. Who are "they"?

BEERMANN. The combined Liberals and Conservatives . . .

HAUSER. And the Conservatives and Liberals combined.

FRAU LUND. Formerly these were distinct parties.

HAUSER. Formerly, — formerly.

BEERMANN. Now there is fusion.

FRAU LUND [*to* FRAU BEERMANN]. You never told me that your husband was in politics.

FRAU BEERMANN. He never was — up to two weeks ago.

FRAU LUND. How quickly things change! And of all the people . . . you!

BEERMANN. What's so startling in that?

FRAU LUND. You told me that you never even read the newspapers.

BOLLAND. We all are cordially grateful to Beermann that in an hour of need he made this sacrifice.

FRAU LUND. The way you talk about the "hour of need" and "sacrifice," Herr Kommerzienrat, it seems to me that you would have been the better candidate.

BOLLAND. Oh, I am too pronouncedly Liberal.

HAUSER. And that's an incurable disease!

BOLLAND. At any rate it makes my nomination impossible. A man was needed who was not known as a party-man.

FRAU LUND. It would seem then that our friend Beermann has become a politician because he . . . is no politician?

HAUSER. That's what is known as "fusion."

BEERMANN. Allow me to ask a question. Why should I not become a Reichstag deputy?

HAUSER. Quite right! Frau Lund — tell him — why should n't he?

BEERMANN. Because I am a novice in politics? We all have to make a start.

HAUSER. It's the only calling where one can start any day, Frau Lund, without being called upon to produce qualifications.

BOLLAND. There you can tell the lawyer. You'd like to establish a civil service examination for members of the Reichstag?

HAUSER. You are not afraid that it might hurt them?

BEERMANN [*with importance*]. Let me tell you, Judge. What a person achieves in real life is far greater than all your book wisdom. We have too many lawyers anyway. It's one of our national misfortunes.

FRAU LUND [*merrily to* FRAU BEERMANN]. Look! He's beginning to debate already.

BOLLAND [*careless pose*]. As you know, I run a soap factory where I employ four hundred and sixty-two workmen . . . let me repeat it, four hundred and sixty-two workmen. Their livelihood and welfare lies in the palm of my hand; don't you think that requires brains?

HAUSER. But . . .

BOLLAND [*interrupting*]. Do you realize what the amount of detail and the management of the whole factory means?

HAUSER. But friend Beermann never even worked in a soap factory. How can that apply to him?

BEERMANN. Oh, what's the use of discussing things if you're joking.

HAUSER. Really, I can't see the connection.

BEERMANN. At any rate, I'm a better candidate than the book-binder whom the Socialists have put up against me.

BOLLAND. Beermann has had greater experience and has a broader point of view.

FRAU LUND. Then there's something else I heard about Herr Beermann, that I don't like at all.

BEERMANN. About me?

FRAU LUND. Yes, I hear that you are the President of the new Society for the Suppression of Vice. What makes you do such things? That is n't nice.

FRAU BEERMANN. I fully agree with you.

BEERMANN. You do? For what reasons? When honest men select me as their President, is that mere flattery?

FRAU LUND. It is not becoming to you, and you are insincere in it.

FRAU BEERMANN. It's as false as anything can be, and you speak about problems which you have never understood.

BEERMANN. Pardon me! I ought to know best what is becoming for me.

FRAU LUND. There's no one in the world I dislike as much as a preacher. But if a person wants to be one . . . then, according to the gospel he ought to live on bread and water. It does n't go well with champagne and lobster.

BEERMANN. Do the Scriptures command that we must be poor to be honorable?

FRAU LUND. No, Beermann, but if I still remember, they speak of a camel and a needle.

BOLLAND. The ladies evidently are not acquainted with the purposes of our new society. I am sure they would subscribe to everyone of the principles which are incorporated in our by-laws.

FRAU LUND. I certainly would not.

BOLLAND [*feeling in his side pocket*]. At least read our "Appeal to the Public."

FRAU LUND [*refusing*]. No, thank you.

BOLLAND. Every woman will rejoice when she reads it.

FRAU LUND. Do you think so? How exceedingly amusing your societies are! So, cards and bowling no longer offer sufficient entertainment. You have to moralize.

HAUSER. I can't help thinking of the notorious starvation freak at the circus who gets his meals on the sly every day.

DR. WASNER. Of course, every conviction can be made ridiculous once it's regarded as insincere. You should n't accuse without proof.

HAUSER. Herr Professor, politeness requires that each individual be regarded as the exception — but not an entire club.

BOLLAND. It is a pity, indeed, that a great movement like ours is disposed of by a few trifling remarks. That embitters our task of curing the nation of social diseases.

FRAU LUND. Where did you get your Doctor's license to cure?

DR. WASNER. It's sad enough that the cure is left to only a few of us.

HAUSER. Well, I'll remain a patient. You'll need a few anyway to keep up your business.

BEERMANN. I consider all this a very cheap kind of humor. I used to joke about these matters myself, but if you will only look upon this problem from a serious point of view, when your eyes are opened to the . . .

FRAU BEERMANN. . . . Your newly acquired ways of talking are quite unbearable.

BEERMANN. Please, don't make a scene.

FRAU BEERMANN. We have been married for twenty-six years; have been very fortunate with our own children. Why worry about other people?

BEERMANN. You are not logical, my love. The mere fact that I brought up my children properly is all the more reason for my joining this movement . . .

FRAU BEERMANN. You did n't lose much sleep about their education.

BEERMANN. Evidently I did n't neglect anything.

FRAU LUND. I'm afraid you pride yourselves on a degree of will power you never exercised.

BEERMANN. Never exercised? My dear Frau Lund, what do you know about the temptations which confront us men? What does a woman know about them?

FRAU LUND. The only thing we women don't know about is the manner in which these temptations terminate.

BEERMANN. Our movement intends to do away with these very deceptions. We want to protect the traditions of the home which women treasure.

FRAU LUND. No. We women also treasure modesty. We dislike to see men pretend to have better morals than they actually have.

BEERMANN. Seriously, Frau Lund. Public immorality must hurt you more.

FRAU LUND. You are mistaken. It requires a genuine manly feeling to sympathize with misery.

DR. WASNER. Misery and vice are different problems.

FRAU LUND. They're not. And that is why we will never agree.

FRAU BEERMANN. All the more reason why my husband should not set himself up as an example. He knows nothing of worry or care.

BEERMANN. We can never subscribe to Frau Lund's principles.

FRAU LUND. No principles, please!

BOLLAND. Out of sheer opposition you will say that you hold different ones from us.

FRAU LUND. No. I will say that I hold none at all.

BOLLAND *and* WASNER [*together*]. But, *gnädige Frau!*

FRAU LUND. I can't help it. I lost them some place on my journey through life. I have learned that all your principles have loop-holes through which people can conveniently slip out and take their friends along with them. So I had my choice of either surrendering them or dishonestly preaching them to others.

DR. WASNER. Real principles of life are never given up.

HAUSER [*with sarcasm*]. Cheers from the gallery!

BOLLAND. Principles of morality are the laws of nature — they are her dictates.

FRAU LUND. Is that the reason you have started your Society for the Suppression of Vice? Do you imagine your by-laws are stronger than the laws of nature?

DR. WASNER. May I make just one remark?

BEERMANN. What is it?

DR. WASNER [*stroking his beard*]. In summing up the matter we can come to this decision: women have a beautiful privilege. Certain facts in life remain a closed book to them. We men, unfortunately, have to come into contact with them.

HAUSER. Did you say *unfortunately?*

DR. WASNER. Please don't interrupt. I maintain "unfortunately"! For the last four years, I have been persistently following obscene literature, and to-day I have gotten together a collection of it, which I daresay is pretty complete. So I am speaking of matters about which I am thoroughly informed. [*With importance.*] The degree of vulgarity our people have reached is incredible.

FRAU LUND. And you have been the "persistent collector" of this vulgarity?

DR. WASNER. Let me assure you that I took upon myself this task with loathing.

HAUSER. Herr Professor, in all my life I have never met a man who for four years voluntarily did something which was loathsome to him.

DR. WASNER. You have no business to make such a remark.

HAUSER. Have you derived no satisfaction from it at all?

DR. WASNER. Satisfaction — if you mean the satisfaction of participating in the uplift of our people.

FRAU LUND. Uplift? Our reformers capitalize our national lack of good taste. Good proof of that are the moral works of art which you patronize.

DR. WASNER. The matter we are discussing is more serious than reforming bad taste.

FRAU LUND. There is nothing more serious.

DR. WASNER [*knowingly*]. If you but knew, Frau Lund!

FRAU LUND. I don't have to call and see your collection. Frankly, to me, the most obscene picture in your gallery could not be more disgusting than the talk you carry on in your meetings.

BEERMANN. Oh! Oh!

FRAU LUND. The nudity of the human body is not disgusting. It is the nudity of your mind. No vice is as repulsive as that virtue of yours which loudly uncovers itself in public — in market places. Vice has at least the shame to hide itself.

BEERMANN [*to* BOLLAND]. Can you understand her?

BOLLAND. I must admit, I can't.

DR. WASNER. *Gnädige Frau* stated that vice hides itself. But in spite of that it exists.

BOLLAND. Yes, she admitted that it exists.

DR. WASNER. Shall we tolerate it merely because it crawls into dark nooks and corners?

FRAU LUND. You reformers! Let more sunshine into this world and vice will not find so many dark corners and nooks to hide in.

BOLLAND. You would not be as opposed to us if you had a son who would be exposed to the temptations of our great cities.

FRAU LUND. I would be ashamed of myself if for personal reasons I became narrow-minded.

BEERMANN. But just stop to think! Picture a healthy young man in his prime falling into the hands of one of these abominable creatures!

FRAU LUND. I could picture something worse than that.

BEERMANN. Still worse?

FRAU LUND. For instance, if he should, with all the credulity of youth, enter into the work of your society.

BOLLAND. Well! Well!

BEERMANN. You don't seem to take anything seriously to-day.

FRAU LUND. Very seriously; this young man perhaps does reach the stage where he sincerely pities your so-called abominable creature. Then he has really advanced in his morality. Let the pity impress itself deeply upon him and your abominable creature has preached better to him than all your high-sounding phrases.

BOLLAND. I am simply dumbfounded.

DR. WASNER. Then you even believe that our society exerts a bad influence?

FRAU LUND [*very positively*]. Yes.

BOLLAND [*with irony*]. Fancy! University professors, philanthropists and a general who are with us in this work — they are, of course, the ones who are likely to corrupt the morals of the younger generation. Frau Lund, no doubt, would like to send our young men to the good Ladies of the Pavement.

DR. WASNER. In what way is our influence bad?

FRAU LUND [*with warmth*]. The young man who joins your society does it only to ape you and to advance his own ends and vainglory. He forever deprives himself of understanding the meaning of life and of becoming helpful to those who suffer.

BOLLAND. Well, what do you think of such statements?

FRAU BEERMANN. They are splendid. I would be very thankful if my boy would embody the ideals of Frau Lund.

BEERMANN. Lena, I simply forbid you to say such things.

FRAU BEERMANN. Really?

BEERMANN. Everybody knows that Frau Lund is a radical, but I don't want you to fall into that habit.

FRAU BEERMANN. I don't acquire new habits as rapidly as you.

HAUSER [*to* BEERMANN]. Don't get excited. A politician must give everyone an opportunity to express his views.

DR. WASNER. I teach young people and I heartily wish they'd continue to seek their ideals among high-minded men and not in the dark city streets.

BOLLAND. Right! And not in the dark city streets.

FRAU LUND. Nor there, Herr Kommerzienrat, where the veil of shame is rudely torn from inborn sensitiveness and it is shorn of every secret charm.

DR. WASNER. Correct! We do want to deprive it of its charm.

FRAU LUND. You succeed in doing that; no tenderness can survive the brutal frankness of your meetings.

DR. WASNER. It is not a national German trait to sugar-coat sin.

FRAU LUND. Why do you confound all lack of refinement with the national character?

DR. WASNER. Because it is good German to call a spade a spade.

BEERMANN [*getting up*]. Why argue to no purpose? Let's start our game of skat.

BOLLAND. Because it appears to be a conflict of two different philosophies.

BEERMANN [*rises, goes to card table, opens a drawer, takes out a deck of cards and opens them*]. It's always the same old story. Never start anything with women! They must have the last word.

[*Sits down at card table.* BOLLAND *gets up and sits beside him.*]

FRAU LUND [*laughing*]. Spoken again like a typical reformer.

DR. WASNER [*rising*]. I don't want to continue this argument, but if by any chance you have gained the impression that I regard this matter from a prejudiced viewpoint, I will cheerfully admit it. I do.

BEERMANN [*calling*]. Oh, do come on, Herr Professor.

DR. WASNER [*turning to card table*]. I'm coming. [*To others.*] I admit with pride that I am prejudiced. For me there exists only one question: How can I best serve my fatherland?

BOLLAND. Herr Professor!

DR. WASNER [*turning to table*]. Just a moment . . . [*To others.*] Let the sturdy qualities of our people be conserved. That stand is unassailable. Then I will be sure that my efforts have at least . . .

BEERMANN [*loudly*]. But, my dear Wasner!

WASNER [*not dismayed, continuing*]. . . . at least a national scope.

HAUSER. Would n't you rather play skat, Professor?

WASNER [*going over to card table*]. There remains only one thing for me to say. If I have used sharp words, I want to apologize.

[*Takes a seat.*]

BEERMANN. You deal, Professor.

DR. WASNER [*shuffling the cards and talking at the same time*]. For me there exists but one ideal. That which Tacitus de-

scribed as it once prevailed among the old Teutons. *Quamquam severa illic matrimonia nec ullam morum partem magis laudaveris.* [*He lets* BOLLAND *cut and then deals.*] The most praiseworthy trait of the Teutons was the strictness of their marriage customs. *Nam prope soli Barbarorum singulis uxoribus contenti sunt.* They were almost the only barbarians to content themselves with a single wife.

BEERMANN [*loudly*]. *Tournée!*

BOLLAND. I'll go you!

BEERMANN. Twenty!

BOLLAND. I'll better that!

BEERMANN. Take it! *Gras-Solo!*

[*They play.* HAUSER, FRAU LUND, FRAU BEERMANN *remain sitting at right.*]

FRAU LUND. At last the Fatherland is saved.

FRAU BEERMANN. It's the only occupation for which nature intended them. They should not tinker with national problems.

HAUSER. Have patience. Political ambition dies out after the first defeat.

FRAU BEERMANN. . . . which I hope will happen.

HAUSER. That's as certain as fate. Else he never would have been nominated.

BEERMANN [*calling from the card table*]. I have pretty sharp hearing!

HAUSER. A very fine acquisition, Beermann, when you grow old.

BOLLAND [*throwing a card on the table*]. Fifty-nine and four make sixty-three! The rest you can take.

[*They throw down their cards;* BOLLAND *collects them and shuffles.*]

WASNER [*half turning to* HAUSER]. And then there is the celebrated passage, "*Ergo septa pudicitia agunt, nullis . . . spectaculorum illecebris corruptæ.*"

BEERMANN. I have six cards.

BOLLAND. The bottom one belongs to the Professor.

WASNER [*as before, continuing*]. So the wife lived surrounded by tenderness and care . . . and so forth, "*Literarum secreta . . .*" Secret communications were not tolerated by either husband or wife.

BEERMANN. Please drop that Tacitus. It's your chance to lead . . .

WASNER. I pass . . .

BOLLAND. So do I.

BEERMANN [*loudly and enthusiastically*]. That's the way to get at them! Trumps! And trumps again.

WASNER [*murmuring*]. "*Paucissima adulteria in tam numerosa gente . . .*"

[*Gradually lapses into silence and then continues to play with energy.*]

FRAU LUND [*with a glance towards the card table*]. Why do we take our principles so seriously? . . . It's really ridiculous how our every opinion soon turns into religious beliefs.

WASNER. The matter is dead serious.

FRAU LUND. Who will think of it tomorrow?

HAUSER [*nodding towards card table*]. Not they, of course. But there are cleverer people. The so-called thinking public in Germany must have some national problem to solve. It finds some such, readily enough in order to play with it. Meanwhile they take no notice that the party in power [1] are lining their pockets.

FRAU LUND. Have n't they always been doing that?

HAUSER. Yes, but not with such ease. Here and there they were rapped over the knuckles. But nowadays they could cart away the entire capitol.

FRAU LUND. There's not so much left to-day.

HAUSER. A couple of pieces anyhow to take along as keepsakes.

FRAU LUND. In my days I saw one reform after another on the bargain counter; but we women remain mere spectators while ideals come and go; we cannot realize how much they mean to men.

HAUSER. My dear Frau Lund, if a real reform should effectively rise among us some day, then you women will have to lend a helping hand. With those [*nodding towards card table*] kindergarten heroes nothing can be accomplished.

FRAU BEERMANN. What influence can we exert so long as men organize their societies for the protection of women's virtue!

HAUSER. These henpecked gentlemen

[1] Men with the brass buttons.

always nominate themselves chastity's guardians.

FRAU BEERMANN. They are of importance only when they can get someone to listen. I'd like to go to their meetings and tell them that.

HAUSER. Their meetings — bosh! Their sort only couple their nonsense with a few self-evident generalities which no one would really oppose. No, first of all they must be educated and that you women alone can accomplish.

FRAU LUND. You say that as if *we* had any influence on public opinion.

HAUSER. You do all the applauding. The whole game is played for you. If you withdraw your applause not a single one of the peacocks of virtue will open up his gospel feathers for exhibition. It is indeed of great importance to you that they do not banish all refinement from our social life.

FRAU LUND [1] [*citing*].

"Yes, while still thy sanctuaries of pleasure
Crowned this earth like in Arcadia
Joy had no penalty nor trader's measure . . . "

DR. WASNER [*when the citation began listened over his cards, now falls in with deep bass*]. " . . . Venus Amathusia."

BOLLAND [*angrily breaking in*]. Man alive, why did n't you play your Ace of Spades? If you had brought out that Ace you'd have a trump — then you'd beat this with a trump . . . and then another trump . . .

BEERMANN. Now, beloved friends and countrymen, no post-mortem speeches. [*While dealing cards.*] You cut, Bolland.

BOLLAND [*cutting cards*]. Make use of your trumps, Herr Professor. I am trying to play into your hands.

DR. WASNER. I thought . . .

BOLLAND. You did n't. If you had you'd play differently.

[1] In original:

FRAU LUND [*zitierend*].
Ja, da eur Wonnedienst noch glänzte,
Wie ganz anders, anders war es da!
Da man deine Tempel noch bekränzte . . .

DR. WASNER [*hat beim Zitieren der Schillerischer Verse herüber gehorcht und fällt nun mit tiefen Basse ein*]. . . . Venus Amathusia.

BEERMANN [*speaking to* FRAU LUND, *while dealing*]. How far have you gotten with your moralizing? Have we agreed yet — [*Laughing.*] Yes; yes; these women folks!

WASNER [*arranging cards in his hand*]. They were citing Schiller a moment ago. We must not forget, ladies, that it was Schiller himself who awakened the national spirit of our race.

HAUSER. Your national spirit unfortunately found its way into the strangest kinds of containers.

DR. WASNER. I decidedly protest against such a poor opinion. If the sincere religious sentiment of the German element . . .

BOLLAND [*interrupting him*]. We are waiting for you, Herr Professor. Are you finally going to announce your cards?

DR. WASNER [*continuing his pathetic tone*]. I pass.

HAUSER. The steady contact with school children keeps our educators refreshingly naïve. That man still believes in the superiority of the Teutonic element.

FRAU LUND. And in the stability of our special German moral standard.

HAUSER. Until some little scandal crops up again. By the way, we shall soon have one right in our city.

FRAU BEERMANN [*with interest*]. Here?

HAUSER. To-morrow you'll read all about it in the newspapers. The police have made a discovery which may prove more than they bargained for.

FRAU BEERMANN. Here?

[BEERMANN, *head sideways, listens over his cards.*]

HAUSER. Last night the police arrested a woman who kept a very open house. She colored it by going under a fancy French name, and they say only entertained the best of society. She kept a diary which fell into the hands of the police.

BEERMANN [*leaves his seat, comes forward, right*]. A diary?

BOLLAND [*drops his cards and rises*]. What sort of a diary?

HAUSER. Oh! Just a naughty little inventory of all of her visitors.

BEERMANN. What is the name of the lady?

HAUSER. Some French name which sounds to me like *rouge*.

BEERMANN. I can't understand how you could forget her name.

BOLLAND. I can't either as long as you seem to know all about it.

FRAU BEERMANN [*to* BEERMANN]. But, Fritz, why should you worry about it?

BEERMANN. Well . . . am I the President of the Vice Suppression Society, or am I not . . . ?

CURTAIN

ACT II

An office at Police Headquarters. To rear on the left stands the Assessor's desk. To the right against the wall, the desk of REISACHER, *the police clerk. Left front is a sofa with two chairs. On the right wall is a telephone. Side entrance left. Another entrance in the middle.* STROEBEL *and* REISACHER *are seated with their backs to one another.* STROEBEL *is reading a newspaper;* REISACHER *is writing. Short pause.*

STROEBEL [*half turning*]. Reisacher!

REISACHER [*also turning*]. Yes, Herr Assessor.[1]

STROEBEL. Are you familiar with the expression "*those higher up*"?

REISACHER. Yes, Herr Assessor.

STROEBEL. What do you understand by it?

REISACHER. Those are the folks who are something and have money somewhere.

STROEBEL. Is it used to express contempt or class hatred?

REISACHER [*eagerly*]. Well . . . well! "*The higher ups*" are respected.

STROEBEL. Are you certain?

REISACHER. Absolutely.

[*They both turn around to their former positions;* STROEBEL *continues to read, and* REISACHER *to write. Short pause.*]

STROEBEL [*half turning*]. Reisacher!

REISACHER [*does likewise*]. Yes, Herr Assessor.

STROEBEL. After all, it means class hatred.

[1] An assessor is a petty police official.

REISACHER. No, no.

STROEBEL. Pay attention. Here it says [*he reads*]: "Of course, for those higher up there are no laws." That means, I take it, that the rich are beyond the control of the law. By "control of the law," I wish you to understand I am attacking the humiliating and anarchistic notion that the law does not apply equally to rich and poor. Also I want to besmirch the rich, by designating them by a slang expression.

REISACHER. Yes, Herr Assessor.

STROEBEL. Then how can you say it does not express class hatred and contempt?

REISACHER. Because, then again, you see, people who have money are respected anyway.

STROEBEL. You will never learn to think precisely, Reisacher.

REISACHER. Yes, Herr Assessor.

[*Both resume their former positions. Short pause.*]

[*Police Commissioner,* FREIHERR VON SIMBACH, *enters left.* STROEBEL *lays aside his paper, rises and salutes.* REISACHER *writes hurriedly.*]

COMMISSIONER.[1] 'Morning, Herr Assessor. [*To* REISACHER.] Take your work outside, Reisacher, until I have finished. [REISACHER *exit through middle door.*] I want to ask you a few questions, Herr Stroebel. [STROEBEL *bows. The* COMMISSIONER *during the conversation takes center of stage and speaks nonchalantly and somewhat drawlingly.*] I read your report. Day before yesterday, that was on Saturday, you ordered the arrest of a certain woman.

STROEBEL. Yes, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER. Well, what about her?

STROEBEL. According to the report of Lieutenant Schmuttermaier, we have in our hands a very dangerous person.

COMMISSIONER. Is that so!

STROEBEL. Within a short time she has almost demoralized our city.

COMMISSIONER. She has been in the city about three or four years . . .

STROEBEL. She has, according to the report.

COMMISSIONER. In what way has sh

[1] President of Police, in original.

been dangerous? Did bald-headed gentlemen loosen up a bit in her house or are there special charges against her?

STROEBEL. No special ones, but her whole behavior. She had a beautiful apartment in the best residential district. According to the report, the neighbors began to talk about her. She dressed in a rather fast and fashionable manner . . .

COMMISSIONER. Then because she did not cater to the common people, you consider her so terrible?

STROEBEL. No, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER. I thought not. Remember, please, I don't want you to get any of the popular ideas about the corruption of our best society. Slit skirts cause as much harm. [STROEBEL *bows.*] What is her name?

STROEBEL. Ninon de Hauteville. But her real name is Therese Hochstetter.

COMMISSIONER. H-a-u-t-e V-i-l-l-e?

STROEBEL. She comes of a good family. Her father was a Peruvian consul. When he lost his money, she married a consular secretary. He divorced her four years ago.

COMMISSIONER. Indeed. So she is a person of refinement.

STROEBEL. But she has . . .

COMMISSIONER. . . . A demoralizing influence. I know all about that. Tell me, what made you arrest her?

STROEBEL [*with importance*]. Eight days ago, I received a letter severely rebuking the police because her place was tolerated . . .

COMMISSIONER. Who was the letter from?

STROEBEL [*hesitatingly*]. It was . . . really . . . anonymous.

COMMISSIONER. I hope that you are very careful about anonymous communications.

STROEBEL. Generally, I pay little attention to them. But this letter was so full of details, I simply had to consider it. Of course, only as a hint and I intended to get proof. I gave it to Schmuttermaier and told him to keep the Hochstetter woman under strict surveillance. Saturday at noon we obtained positive evidence.

COMMISSIONER. Then?

STROEBEL. Then I ordered Schmuttermaier to raid the place . . .

COMMISSIONER. . . . During which you found a diary in her apartments?

STROEBEL. Yes, Commissioner; a diary with the names of her visitors. The dates and their social standing. Everything.

COMMISSIONER. Have you finished reading it?

STROEBEL. No, sir. I just glanced at it. I only got it from Schmuttermaier an hour ago. I was not in the office yesterday.

COMMISSIONER [*thoughtfully*]. It's too late to do anything to-day. [*Consulting his watch.*] Let me see. Bring me an exact report of all important names contained in the diary . . . at ten to-morrow morning.

STROEBEL. Yes, Commissioner, at ten o'clock.

COMMISSIONER. And remember, it's very important that you make this report personally. Don't let the clerk see the diary. It has not yet been in his hands?

STROEBEL [*going to his desk*]. No. It's locked up in my desk.

COMMISSIONER. Time enough to bring it to me to-morrow morning when you make your report.

STROEBEL. How do you want me to get my data, Commissioner? Shall I summon the important people involved?

COMMISSIONER [*with emphasis*]. Only . . . the important . . . names . . . that's all. By the way, how far have you gone in the case? Have you taken any further steps?

STROEBEL. No. I will examine the Hochstetter woman in a little while . . .

COMMISSIONER. And Schmuttermaier? Has he orders to make any further raids?

STROEBEL. Not yet. I want to read the diary first.

COMMISSIONER. Above all, I do not want him to act without instructions. People of no importance like to do important things.

STROEBEL. Yes, Commissioner. Your orders will be carried out.

COMMISSIONER. Orders? I never give orders. You have your duties to perform. I don't care to tell you what to do . . . But there must be no further raids until I have seen the diary.

STROEBEL. Certainly, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER. At the same time, don't neglect your duty.

STROEBEL. I will do everything necessary for the promotion of public decency.

COMMISSIONER [*who has been pacing the room, turns suddenly*]. Public decency? Very well, very well . . . [*Short pause.*] We occupy a most peculiar position. Do we not, Herr Stroebel? [STROEBEL *bows.*] We know fully the existing difference between official . . . and let me say . . . personal sensitiveness, do we not? [STROEBEL *bows in accord.*] I mention this merely because you spoke of public decency. There is a decency about which you and I privately might have most interesting discussions. As far as I am concerned, such decency can be without limits. But there is another — the public decency — which it is our business to police. This has its very precise limits. For example, a scandal. Scandal of any description. Am I right, Herr Assessor?

STROEBEL [*clicks his heels together*]. Certainly, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER. That brings me to another matter. For the past few weeks, there has been in the city a so-called Society for the Suppression of Vice. Have you any sympathy with these people?

STROEBEL. I know of their aims . . .

COMMISSIONER. Their aims do not interest me a bit. I mean, do you personally cooperate with them?

STROEBEL. Not . . . yet.

COMMISSIONER. Not yet? . . . Hem! . . . This Society is likely to interest itself in this case. If someone comes to see me, Herr Stroebel, I will refer him to you. [STROEBEL *bows.*] Kindly bear this one thing in mind. These men have political ambition, and are playing to the press. On the whole the thing shows conservative tendencies.

STROEBEL. Certainly, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER. Welcome them with open arms. Agree gratefully to every suggestion for the betterment of the people, *et cetera.* Listen with respectful appreciation but do nothing further.

STROEBEL [*uncertain*]. Nothing further? . . .

COMMISSIONER. No . . . nothing further.

STROEBEL. Yes, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER. These people must remain assured that they wield a great influence. As a matter of fact, they have none at all and it's a good thing they have n't.

STROEBEL. So, I may . . .

COMMISSIONER. . . . Do everything you can be responsible for. As a matter of principle, I do not like to give orders. You will submit that report then [*consulting his watch*] at ten to-morrow? Good morning! [*Goes toward the door left, remains standing a moment, then turns around.*] You have been rather zealous in your work, I must say. [STROEBEL *bows slightly.*] To arrest a woman on the strength of an anonymous letter shows excessive zeal. [STROEBEL *bows slightly.*] I like to see my men energetic but [*clears his throat*] bear in mind what I just said. Careful of a scandal! Good morning!

[*Exit.* STROEBEL *sits down and stares at ceiling. He swings his chair around, then whistles.*]

[REISACHER *comes in through middle door and seats himself at his desk. He coughs.*]

STROEBEL [*half turning*]. Reisacher.

REISACHER [*does likewise*]. Yes, Herr Assessor.

STROEBEL. How long have you been in the Police Department?

REISACHER. It will be eighteen years this fall.

STROEBEL. You have seen many a change, no doubt?

REISACHER. Surely.

STROEBEL. Tell me, how long has our Commissioner been in office?

REISACHER. The Commissioner? Oh . . . it 's seven. No, let me see, it 's eight years . . .

STROEBEL. Hem . . . do you really suppose he wants us to keep our eyes wide open all the time?

REISACHER [*eagerly*]. Certainly. That's what he wants.

STROEBEL. Does he? . . . [*Short pause.*] I had an idea he did n't want us to be too strict for fear of notoriety.

REISACHER [*eagerly*]. No, no. He certainly would not like that.

STROEBEL [*turns around completely*]. Listen, Reisacher, you contradict yourself all the time.

REISACHER [*turns around likewise*]. I beg your pardon, Herr Stroebel. May I sug gest . . .

STROEBEL. But you are always contradicting yourself. First you say yes, and then you say no.

REISACHER. I beg your pardon, Herr Assessor Stroebel. I wanted to say that in the Police Department it is like this: Everything you do is all right, if it turns out all right.

STROEBEL [*turns back to his desk*]. You will never learn to formulate a thought precisely.

REISACHER [*also turns*]. All right, Herr Stroebel.

[*Short pause.* STROEBEL *reads.* REISACHER *writes.*]

[*A commotion is heard through the middle door, which is thrown open and* NINON DE HAUTEVILLE *enters. Behind her a policeman, who holds her tightly by the arm. She tries to free herself.*]

HAUTEVILLE. [*She wears a large picture hat, and is highly perfumed.*] Keep your hands off me. I have n't killed anyone. Please, let me go.

STROEBEL. [*He has risen.*] What's the matter?

POLICE OFFICER [*releasing her, stands at attention*]. Have the honor, sir, to report this disreputable woman — the Hochstetter person.

HAUTEVILLE. Please, help me, sir. I am being handled like the commonest criminal.

STROEBEL. Why do you keep that hat on? You are not paying us a visit?

HAUTEVILLE. Indeed not! I am not paying a visit. If I lived to be a hundred, it would never occur to me to pay you a visit.

STROEBEL. Don't talk so much. Do you understand? [*To* REISACHER.] Get your report book ready.

HAUTEVILLE. Is this the complaint office? I demand to know at least why I was arrested.

STROEBEL. Oh, here you'll find that out soon enough. [*To the officer.*] You can go now. [*Officer exit through middle door.*]

HAUTEVILLE. Oh, *monsieur*, what shameful treatment. I was locked up in a cell with two ordinary street walkers. You will help me, won't you?

STROEBEL [*who has crossed over to* REISACHER]. Please don't be so familiar.

HAUTEVILLE. I am so helpless. No one will listen to me. No one answers me. An awful looking woman brought me a cup of yellow broth and a rusty spoon — [*indicating with her hand*] so big. "Eat," she said, and threw it down and left. You will see to it, sir, that my friends are notified, won't you?

STROEBEL [*glancing over* REISACHER'S *shoulder*]. Your friends cannot help you here. [*To* REISACHER.] Don't make the margin so wide. You are wasting good paper. [*To* HAUTEVILLE.] Your friends can do nothing at all for you.

HAUTEVILLE. You think so, do you? One single word and I'll be set free.

STROEBEL [*contemptuously*]. Indeed!

HAUTEVILLE. Before the day is over everyone of you will have to apologize to me. Yes, before this day is over.

STROEBEL. Certainly. [*To* REISACHER.] The word "Assessor" has two "*s*'s" in all cases.

HAUTEVILLE. If you people had the least idea whom you disturbed. If you knew whom you compelled to hide in the wardrobe.

STROEBEL [*turning quickly to* HAUTEVILLE]. In the wardrobe? So! [*To* REISACHER.] Make a note of that, Reisacher. [*With emphasis.*] So someone escaped us by hiding in the wardrobe.

HAUTEVILLE. Yes, someone escaped you by hiding in the wardrobe.

STROEBEL [*suddenly very friendly*]. Upon my word, Madame, I believe that we understand each other fully. You are a clever woman. You will not try to deny the facts.

HAUTEVILLE. Not one solitary thing. I am most anxious that you should try to find out all.

STROEBEL. Bravo! I came near saying that I respect you for that. [*Benevolently.*] You know, Hochstetter, every man is

liable to make a fool of himself now and then.

HAUTEVILLE. Indeed they are! I know best what fools men do make of themselves.

STROEBEL. Now and then people violate the law. But they ought not to deny it afterwards. That's the sad part of it, because we always find out the truth in the end.

HAUTEVILLE. I wish you had it now.

STROEBEL. We have a clue. But you are a woman of character, I admit. I take off my hat to you.

HAUTEVILLE. Indeed!

STROEBEL. I certainly do.

HAUTEVILLE. I was afraid I had lost all refinement after spending the last two nights in such company.

STROEBEL [*benevolently*]. No doubt, it was a trifle hard.

HAUTEVILLE. It was terrible. They really do make me pay for discreetness.

STROEBEL. Your patrons are the very men who make it so hard for you. They get you into trouble and then expect you to protect them. Is n't it so?

HAUTEVILLE. What an experience for me! To have my apartment raided at night and be simply dragged away myself.

STROEBEL. That is too much.

HAUTEVILLE. I was not even allowed to take along a change of underwear. Then I am locked up with women who have every known variety of vermin.

STROEBEL. And with all that they expect you to remain silent!

HAUTEVILLE. When I want to comb my hair, the matron gives me a comb which these women have been using a whole week.

STROEBEL. That simply can't go on.

HAUTEVILLE. And the air! I never knew that such odors existed on this earth.

STROEBEL. Still you are to shield the others! After all, you know, I think that discreetness is just talk.

HAUTEVILLE. Talk?

STROEBEL. I mean if anybody ever had a moral right to give things away, fully and freely, you are that person; . . . after all you have suffered.

HAUTEVILLE. That's right. I am that person.

STROEBEL. Well, then; did somebody escape into that wardrobe?

HAUTEVILLE. Yes, somebody did escape into that wardrobe.

STROEBEL [*eagerly*]. Who? [*Short pause.*]

HAUTEVILLE [*laughs curtly*]. Who?

STROEBEL [*more sharply*]. Who on Saturday night at 10 o'clock escaped the search of the police by hiding in the wardrobe?

HAUTEVILLE [*laughs curtly*]. It is quite unnecessary for me to tell you that.

STROEBEL [*sharply*]. Why?

HAUTEVILLE. You are certain to find it out ultimately.

STROEBEL. Ultimately?

HAUTEVILLE. Even if I wanted to I could not tell! Lord, when a person gets strictly accustomed to never mentioning any name, it is almost impossible to do it. I believe that I would have to learn how first.

STROEBEL [*shouting*]. And you will learn it; I promise you that. You . . .

HAUTEVILLE. *Mais monsieur!*

STROEBEL [*shouting*]. No "monsieur" about it. Here you'll talk good plain English.

HAUTEVILLE. But why are you getting so excited?

STROEBEL [*to* REISACHER]. I am nice to this person. I reason with her, and she says that she will first have to learn how to expose her crowd. [*Shouts.*] Decency is what you'll have to learn and I'll teach it to you.

HAUTEVILLE. Oh, not this very minute.

STROEBEL. I know you. I know your sort! You want to gain time so that you can concoct the blackest lies.

HAUTEVILLE [*calmly*]. That would be entirely superfluous. The cleverest lie could not help me half as much as the simple truth.

STROEBEL. Out with it!

HAUTEVILLE. It's better if you find it out through someone else.

STROEBEL. That's your opinion.

HAUTEVILLE. You would only be embarrassed and I would be guilty of a breach of confidence.

STROEBEL [*with contempt*]. As though people confided in such as you.

HAUTEVILLE. I think that they rely upon the fact that our loyalty is not "just talk."

STROEBEL [*again calm*]. Listen to me. I do not think that you entirely understand your position. [HAUTEVILLE *shrugs her shoulders.*] No, I don't think that you know at all what is involved.

HAUTEVILLE. On the contrary, it is far worse that you don't seem to realize who is involved.

STROEBEL [*quickly*]. In what?

HAUTEVILLE. In the wardrobe.

STROEBEL. Have you lost your senses? You are a prisoner here. Do you want to poke fun at us?

HAUTEVILLE. No.

STROEBEL. Then don't consider yourself so important with those meaning insinuations.

HAUTEVILLE. If I did, I'd soon lose my importance after eating that yellow broth from those rusty tin plates.

STROEBEL. And that will continue for some time.

HAUTEVILLE [*energetically*]. No, it will not. I tell you right now that I will not spend another night in that dirty hole. I will not be mistreated any longer.

STROEBEL [*with sarcasm*]. Of course we are going to ask you for your kind permission.

HAUTEVILLE. I will not remain here. If they think I will let them ruin me, they're very much mistaken. This is an outrage and here fair play stops.

STROEBEL. The likes of you and fair play!

HAUTEVILLE [*bitterly*]. Yes, the likes of me. Every day we hear the confessions of those very people who publicly show contempt for us. We know how false are all virtuous words with which they condemn us, but we remain silent.

STROEBEL. Of course, you do all this out of pure sense of fair play?

[*He imitates the motion of counting money.*]

HAUTEVILLE. Money? . . . My dear fellow, with money our patrons pay well for that very thing which they later on call indecent. You get as much decency from us for money as you get from other people, but believe me, we could shatter many illusions.

STROEBEL. Well, make a beginning right here.

HAUTEVILLE. It ought to be impossible here. The police have as few illusions as we. That is, provided they are properly instructed.

STROEBEL. That's right now, put us in the same class with yourself.

HAUTEVILLE. Why not? We and the police could easily ruin the credit of virtue, but neither of us do it. You — you because you regard that credit as a good substitute for the principal, and we, — Lord, because we need this credit as well.

STROEBEL. Both of us?

HAUTEVILLE. The very moment that public virtue loses its credit, the secret vices will drop in market value.

STROEBEL. What are you talking about anyway?

HAUTEVILLE. I'm telling you why both of us must hush things up.

STROEBEL. Then you are not convinced that there is a real public morality?

HAUTEVILLE. You mean that morality which you put on with your street clothes? I know it well. Gentlemen take it off in my apartment and hang it up in my wardrobe, and there I can inspect it very thoroughly. It is truly remarkable how our respected gentlemen still make formal social visits in costumes which have so often been patched.

REISACHER [*who up to this point apparently without paying any attention, has been sitting with his back toward them, turns halfway round*]. Pardon me, Herr Assessor.

STROEBEL [*impatiently*]. Now what do you want?

REISACHER. Pardon me, Herr Assessor, shall I put all this talk into the minutes?

STROEBEL. No, I will dictate to you later. [*To* HAUTEVILLE.] You know that you are not here to amuse yourself.

HAUTEVILLE. I know that.

STROEBEL. Listen to me quietly. You hinted before that if we kept you here an-

other night you would confess everything. Well I tell you here and now that we will not keep you here one, but a number of nights. You can ease your conscience at once.

HAUTEVILLE. I would only make yours the heavier for it.

STROEBEL. My conscience?

HAUTEVILLE. Yes, if I tell you here, there will be no possibility of a mistake, but everything must remain a mistake.

STROEBEL. I have patience with you, but I will not let you fool me. Now get yourself together and consider every word. What must remain a mistake?

HAUTEVILLE. Everything that has happened since Saturday night.

STROEBEL. All that must remain a mistake?

HAUTEVILLE. It simply must not have happened. No one broke into my apartment. No one arrested me. No one compelled anyone to hide in the wardrobe.

STROEBEL [*shouts*]. And no one ever saw such an insolent female.

HAUTEVILLE. This browbeating.

STROEBEL. It is meant for such as you.

HAUTEVILLE [*indignantly stopping her ears*]. It reminds one so much of the tin plates and the comb.

STROEBEL [*angrily pacing the room*]. I never heard anything like it. Picture it! She makes insinuations as though we had something to be afraid of. [*He stops pacing and faces her.*] You evidently imagine that the whole government would run away from you.

HAUTEVILLE. No, but it ran away from your Lieutenant.

STROEBEL. Where?

HAUTEVILLE. Into the wardrobe.

STROEBEL [*pacing up and down*]. I will bring that fellow out of your wardrobe. I will bring him to light. Into bright daylight! [*Remains standing in front of* HAUTEVILLE.] What did you say?

HAUTEVILLE. *Non.*

STROEBEL [*resuming his pacing*]. One of those fine fellows who wallow in the mire and then expect us to make exceptions. [*Stops pacing, facing* HAUTEVILLE.] What were you saying?

HAUTEVILLE. Nothing.

STROEBEL. Sad enough that now and again a halfway decent person strays into your place.

HAUTEVILLE. He can only regret that he was disturbed.

STROEBEL [*goes quickly to desk and unlocks a drawer*]. Besides, do not deceive yourself. We do not need your disclosures. [*He takes out a rather bulky paper, a school composition book, and holds it triumphantly in the air.*] There; do you recognize this?

HAUTEVILLE [*quietly, without a single trace of surprise*]. It looks like my diary.

STROEBEL. It is your book. It was found in your desk.

HAUTEVILLE [*very calm*]. The desk was locked.

STROEBEL. It was broken open. Well? What about your loyalty now?

HAUTEVILLE [*shrugs her shoulders*]. I kept it. I have n't a fire-proof safe.

STROEBEL [*contemptuously*]. Would you by chance like to show me the name?

HAUTEVILLE. What name?

STROEBEL. Of the gentleman in the wardrobe.

HAUTEVILLE [*laughs*]. His name really is not in it.

STROEBEL. Do not evade but show me.

HAUTEVILLE. Oh, there are parties whose names are not in the Hotel Register. They travel incognito.

STROEBEL [*persuadingly*]. Hochstetter, I have an impression that you are not such a stupid girl, and I believe that you would like to [*pointing to the diary*] take good care of your — patrons. If you do not immediately reveal the name of that man, I will summon the whole bunch.

HAUTEVILLE [*shrugs her shoulders*]. That's something I cannot stop you from doing.

STROEBEL. What then is your belief in fair play?

HAUTEVILLE. I never submitted that diary to you. You could not have gotten it from me voluntarily, but it quite suits me that the officer found it in my desk.

STROEBEL. Why?

HAUTEVILLE. Because he might have searched for it in the wardrobe.

STROEBEL. Now my patience is at an end. [*Presses the button on his desk.*] I will have no consideration for anyone.

HAUTEVILLE. After all, perhaps you will. For yourself. [*Police officer enters.*]

STROEBEL. Take this woman downstairs. [*The officer leaves with* HAUTEVILLE. STROEBEL *sits down, pushes the chair angrily to the desk, then gets up and throws the diary and several other books on the desk, saying to himself:*] Never heard anything like it! Such impudence!

[REISACHER *looks at him with amusement. A knock at the door.*]

STROEBEL [*formally*]. Come in!

BEERMANN [*enters hastily from the left. He breathes heavily. He has a handkerchief in his hand, with which he frequently mops his brow*]. Is this the proper department at last? I am being sent all around the building. [*Breathing heavily.*] I hope I am finally in the proper bureau.

STROEBEL. What do you want?

BEERMANN. Pardon me for a moment while I catch my breath. I climbed twice to the third floor and again down to the ground floor. The Commissioner sent me to room 147 and there they told me to go to room 174.

STROEBEL. Who sent you?

BEERMANN [*taking a deep breath*]. The Commissioner. I really wanted to speak to him personally, but he told me I should go to the gentleman who has "Morality." Are you the gentleman who has all the morality?

STROEBEL. Certainly.

BEERMANN. At last. [*Mopping his brow.*] Good God, when a matter is so urgent and so much depends on it they ought not to chase one all over the building. I must rest a bit. All this excitement and running up and down stairs . . . So you are the gentleman who has the matter in hand.

STROEBEL. What matter?

BEERMANN. On Saturday night a lady was arrested. A Madame de Hauteville, and certain papers were taken from her. Have you those papers here?

STROEBEL. What business is that of yours?

BEERMANN. My name is Beermann; Fritz Beermann, the banker. I am the Chairman of the Society for the Suppression of Vice.

STROEBEL [*very politely*]. Oh, indeed! Pardon me! I did n't recall your name immediately, but I was expecting you.

BEERMANN [*startled*]. You — were expecting — me?

STROEBEL. The Commissioner said that you would undoubtedly call on us.

BEERMANN. He said that I undoubtedly would call? But he never mentioned a word to me about that, and I saw him just a moment ago. Perhaps after all it will be better if I go down to see him again?

STROEBEL. That is not necessary. I have full charge of the matter.

BEERMANN. Oh, yes, quite right; you have charge of the matter. And you have those writings here too?

STROEBEL. The diary? [*He indicates the desk.*] Here it is.

BEERMANN [*peeps anxiously over*]. Then it is a regular diary?

STROEBEL. Quite correctly kept. Gives date and names. Even little jesting remarks about the people concerned.

BEERMANN [*shouts*]. But that is an unheard-of insolence!

STROEBEL. Yes.

BEERMANN. Why does she write such things? To what purpose? Can't she herself realize how dangerous it is? Fancy, a woman whose whole stock in trade is secrecy, keeping an address book of her patrons. Confound her!

STROEBEL. But to us as evidence it is priceless.

BEERMANN. I ask you — why does she record such things?

STROEBEL. We can only be glad of it, Herr Beermann.

BEERMANN. We?

STROEBEL. She'd lie. I tell you she'd deny everything, and that puts an end to the case. [*Holding the diary in the air.*] But here we have the whole bunch.

BEERMANN. As though she wanted to turn State's evidence . . .

STROEBEL. Let her just come to court with her confounded fine talk. [*Imitating*

HAUTEVILLE'S *manners:*] "It simply must not have happened." I will drive her to the wall with what happened. We will simply bring up those fellows, one after the other.

BEERMANN [*dismayed*]. To court!

STROEBEL. Certainly, and that means; hand on the Bible and swear. Then we shall see if "no one compelled anyone to hide in the wardrobe."

BEERMANN. How?

STROEBEL. They will not commit perjury.

BEERMANN. That's utterly impossible!

STROEBEL. I will make it quite warm for that man, in any event.

BEERMANN. But, Counselor!

STROEBEL [*clinking heels*]. Assessor Stroebel.

BEERMANN. But, Assessor, that is simply impossible. You do not want to ruin the family life of the entire city, do you?

STROEBEL. In what way?

BEERMANN. Do you expect a respectable gentleman to appear in court and in the presence of all people to say, yes; it is true that I . . . and so forth?

STROEBEL. Why not?

BEERMANN [*shouting*]. But they are all respectable fathers of families!

STROEBEL. But, my dear Herr Beermann, what difference does that make to me?

BEERMANN. It must make a difference. It makes a difference to everybody at all times.

STROEBEL. I assure you that I am not a bit sentimental.

BEERMANN [*glancing over to* REISACHER]. Could we have a few words together, alone?

STROEBEL. If you wish it. Reisacher, finish your police report in the outer office.

REISACHER. Certainly, Herr Assessor.

[*Takes several sheets of paper and goes out through the middle door.*]

STROEBEL. Do have a seat, Herr Beermann.

[BEERMANN *sits down on the sofa.* STROEBEL *does likewise.*]

BEERMANN [*mopping his brow*]. A personal question, Herr Assessor, are you married?

STROEBEL. No.

BEERMANN. I thought not. If you had a family you would not speak in that fashion of sentimentality.

STROEBEL. If I had a family, I would not, to begin with, be involved in this.

BEERMANN. But . . .

STROEBEL. My name would not appear in the diary of Hauteville.

BEERMANN. You never can tell.

STROEBEL. Excuse me. What is there left of family life when such things happen?

BEERMANN. What do you mean? If nobody finds it out?

STROEBEL. But such a man must live constantly under a deception.

BEERMANN. My dear Assessor. If the white lie ceases in married life, the couple drifts apart.

STROEBEL. I cannot believe that!

BEERMANN [*persuadingly*]. Take my word for it. In every happy marriage the parties lie to each other to keep their affection from cooling.

STROEBEL. But both of them remain faithful.

BEERMANN. Not in the least.

STROEBEL. Don't say that!

BEERMANN. Not in the least; anyhow not to the very letter. A husband is true to his wife even if he . . . and so forth.

STROEBEL. Your views surprise me.

BEERMANN. This is what I mean. He is true in his own fashion. He remains kind to his wife, takes a good care of his family, and that is the principal thing. That other which you have in mind is only an ideal.

STROEBEL. Ideals are lived up to.

BEERMANN. Well, yes. But if we don't live up to them, we at least respect them.

STROEBEL. Herr Beermann, I am astounded. You are the President of the Society for the Suppression of Vice?

BEERMANN. Can I help it that I was elected?

STROEBEL. But at least you represent the views of your Society. I thought you came here for that reason.

BEERMANN. For what reason?

STROEBEL. To express your satisfaction at our discovery of the business of this person.

BEERMANN. You thought I came here on that account?

STROEBEL. Did n't you?

BEERMANN [*mopping his brow with his handkerchief*]. You'll have to pardon me, Herr Assessor; I am still affected by that running up and down stairs.

STROEBEL. Perhaps our conversation tires you?

BEERMANN. Don't mention it. I simply cannot follow you so quickly. A moment ago you mentioned a diary, did n't you?

STROEBEL. Of this Hauteville woman. — Yes.

BEERMANN. Have you been through this diary?

STROEBEL. No. I have not had time yet.

BEERMANN. But you just spoke about some jesting comments in it.

STROEBEL. Only those I noticed in glancing through it.

BEERMANN [*relieved*]. Ah!

STROEBEL. Besides, I must tell you, Herr Beermann, that the contents of this book must remain a secret to you. My orders are not to show it to anyone.

BEERMANN. No, no. I don't want to know anything about it.

STROEBEL. You will find out everything later when the matter comes up in court.

BEERMANN [*dismayed*]. Will it be read there?

STROEBEL. Certainly. To-day I can only tell you that we will proceed vigorously. You can satisfy your Society on that point.

BEERMANN [*rising*]. But that does n't satisfy me at all. Think of the consequences.

STROEBEL [*rising also*]. What do you care about the consequences. Your Society has its very high aims. Your propaganda states that you will prosecute the outcast of society with iron energy and now you see your ideals realized.

BEERMANN. Our propaganda states that we will intervene from national, moral and social viewpoints, to protect the marriage vows. If this scandal becomes public the marriage relationship will be undermined.

STROEBEL. What sort of moral viewpoint do you call that?

BEERMANN. It is the Society's. Don't you understand that the influential class of society will be involved!

STROEBEL. Then that class will have only itself to blame.

BEERMANN. That's out of the question. We must find a loop-hole.

STROEBEL. Within the scope of the law there are no loop-holes.

BEERMANN. Don't tell *me* that. Well then, go around the law.

STROEBEL [*surprised*]. Herr Beermann!

BEERMANN. Of course! I have lived long enough to know that.

STROEBEL. I shall do my duty.

BEERMANN. Am I interfering with your duty? I belong to that class of people who respect the police only because the police respect our social position.

STROEBEL. I appreciate that.

BEERMANN. I also take part in political life. I am a candidate for the Reichstag and as such I have a decided opinion about these matters.

STROEBEL. Without doubt, Herr Beermann.

BEERMANN. Well then, there are, in extreme cases, ways around the law, and there must be.

STROEBEL. I am of a different opinion.

BEERMANN. God knows, it is not the business of the police to provoke this enormous scandal. All authority will be destroyed. It will shatter the respect of the masses for the people higher up.

STROEBEL. But this scandal was provoked — [*knocking on the diary with his finger*] — by these very people.

BEERMANN. If a man once in a while goes into a certain room — that is no scandal. It only becomes a scandal when the story is made known to every Tom, Dick and Harry. That's what must be prevented!

STROEBEL. I value the humane motive which evidently is prompting you, Herr Beermann. But you must admit that we are acting entirely in accord with the views of the classes you mention.

BEERMANN. You are not!

STROEBEL. Yes, we are. Two weeks ago the good people here founded a Society because they felt it was necessary to proceed more severely against public immorality . . .

BEERMANN. . . . Against immorality in

the lower strata where it easily degenerates into licentiousness. As the President of this Society, I, at least, ought to know what was intended.

STROEBEL. Even Frau Hochstetter belongs to the lower strata. If we are now stepping on anybody's corns, I am very sorry . . .

BEERMANN. The police have no business to do anything they will be sorry for later on. Good Lord, had the Commissioner only listened to me. An affair like this should not be treated in such a purely business-like way.

STROEBEL. The Commissioner can only tell you the same thing. He cannot change the law.

BEERMANN. Anything can be done.

STROEBEL. Not at this stage. We could probably have prevented it had we known that this case would have such far-reaching consequences, but now here are the proofs. [*Pointing to the diary.*] No one in the world can destroy them, not even the Commissioner.

BEERMANN. Then what do you propose to do with them?

STROEBEL. They are going down to the District Attorney's office. The avalanche is on its way.

BEERMANN. And we have simply to wait and watch what it hits?

[*Telephone bell rings.*]

STROEBEL. Pardon me a moment.

[*Goes to the right to the telephone. While* STROEBEL *is answering the telephone, and has his back to* BEERMANN, *the latter crosses to the desk and tries to look into the diary. Timidly he opens it several times, but shuts it again quickly, when he fears that* STROEBEL *will turn around.*]

STROEBEL [*answering the telephone*]. Police Department . . . Assessor Stroebel speaking. Who is this please . . . yes, this is Assessor Stroebel . . . Yes, Commissioner . . . [*pause*] I understand you, I will remain in the office . . . Yes, I examined the Hochstetter woman . . . Yes, this Madame Hauteville . . . [*pause*] I will remain in the office until you call . . . Yes, Commissioner. Good-bye. [*He hangs up the receiver.* BEERMANN *energetically closes the book and tries to appear indifferent.*] Now you can convince yourself, Herr Beermann, the Commissioner himself is following up this matter. He wants to have another conference with me about it to-day.

BEERMANN. Am I to wait helplessly until the catastrophe happens?

STROEBEL. You must be consistent . . .

BEERMANN. It is possible that my best friends, acquaintances or relatives are involved . . .

STROEBEL. You must remain consistent. Does n't this splendidly justify the founding of your Society?

BEERMANN [*in a rage*]. Oh, leave me alone with your stupid Vice Society. Are we not all human, after all!

STROEBEL. I do not understand you.

BEERMANN. Do you realize what severe pangs of conscience I suffer? Last night as I pictured to myself all that is about to happen, all these family misfortunes, I asked myself this question: what really is morality? And . . . I could not find the answer.

STROEBEL. Although you are . . .

BEERMANN. Although I am Chairman of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, yes, sir. Then I asked myself this: Which is the more important: that we are moral, or that we seem moral?

STROEBEL. Have you found the answer?

BEERMANN. I have. I have become fully convinced that it is far more important for the people to believe in our morality.

STROEBEL. But you did n't need a Society for that.

BEERMANN. Yes, we did. Just to be moral is something that I can accomplish in my room by myself, but that has no educational value. The important thing is to ally one's self publicly with moral issues. This has a beneficial effect on the family and state.

STROEBEL. I daresay that this side of the question has not occurred to me.

BEERMANN. Just consider. Morality holds exactly the same position as religion. We must always create the impression that there is such a thing and we must make

each other believe that each of us have it. Do you suppose for one moment that religion would last if the Church dealt publicly with our sins? But she forgives them quietly. The State ought to be just as shrewd.

STROEBEL. Many a thing you say seems quite true.

BEERMANN. It is true, you can depend upon it.

STROEBEL. Theoretically perhaps. But that does not change it one bit. As long as the law prescribes it, these offenses [*pointing to the diary*] must be dealt with publicly.

BEERMANN. Although you know that thus public decency will be undermined. [STROEBEL *shrugs his shoulders.*] Although the State will suffer by it?

STROEBEL [*again shrugs his shoulders*]. Well . . .

BEERMANN. The Administration knows very well the sort of conservative element there is in the Society for the Suppression of Vice.

STROEBEL. Yes, and values it highly.

BEERMANN. Let us suppose — I do not know if it be so — but let us just suppose that only one member of the Society once had a weak little moment and his name were in this book . . .

STROEBEL [*energetically*]. Then he would be summoned to court without regard or mercy.

BEERMANN. And the whole Society would be made ridiculous and would go up in the air.

STROEBEL [*shrugs his shoulders*]. Well . . .

BEERMANN [*shouts*]. That is the height of folly, I tell you!

STROEBEL [*instructively*]. It is the fulfilment of our duty. You are a layman. With you sentiments play an important part. We, the police, on the other hand are compelled to sacrifice our feelings to our duty.

BEERMANN [*holding his hands to his ears*]. Oh, stop that!

STROEBEL. Official duty blocks our way.

BEERMANN [*angrily*]. But even a jackass can jump over blocks.

STROEBEL [*offended*]. Herr Beermann, I did not hear that remark.

BEERMANN. Let me tell you something! Do you know what we have been doing for the past three weeks? . . . Talking ourselves hoarse in order to bring about an election friendly to the present administration. For the past three weeks it has been nothing but Fatherland, and the state and religion! And this is your gratitude! In the devil's own name — just picture it to yourself — a man who has been fighting the opposition in thirty different political meetings might be involved in this.

STROEBEL [*shrugs his shoulders*]. What can I do?

BEERMANN. Is the Administration going to deliver him over to his opponents?

STROEBEL. We would be very sorry for him, but we would have to summon him to court.

BEERMANN. Without regard or mercy —? [*Telephone bell rings loudly.*]

STROEBEL. Pardon me for a moment. [STROEBEL *goes to the telephone and this time he turns completely around so that his back is toward* BEERMANN.] Police Department . . . yes . . . Commissioner; this is Stroebel at the telephone . . . [*Short pause.*] When she was arrested? . . . When she was arrested there was Lieutenant Schmuttermaier and an officer . . . [*Short pause.*] Just one policeman . . . [*Pause.*] . . . Yes, Commissioner [*short pause*] I should tell that Lieutenant [*short interruption*] jackass Schmuttermaier to come over to the office immediately . . . [*Short pause.*] I shall wait for you until you come . . . Yes, Commissioner.

[*During this telephone conversation* BEERMANN *steps near to the desk. With a shaking hand he takes up the diary, but quickly puts it down again. Then he picks it up again and with a rapid and energetic movement puts it into his breast pocket.* STROEBEL *with a rebuked demeanor goes from the telephone to the desk.* BEERMANN *turns around so that* STROEBEL *cannot see his face. He is disturbed and coughs in order to hide his embarrassment.* STROEBEL

presses a button on REISACHER'S *desk.*]

BEERMANN [*while coughing*]. I realize now that nothing more can be done. I shan't take up your time.

STROEBEL [*anxiously*]. No, no, please remain. The Commissioner himself will be here in a moment. Then you may talk to him.

BEERMANN. But you just told me that there was no use waiting . . .

[REISACHER *enters through center door.*]

STROEBEL [*urgently to* REISACHER]. Reisacher, go and look for Lieutenant Schmuttermaier immediately. If he is not in the building, send to his home or telephone for him. Leave word that he must come over immediately.

REISACHER. Yes, Herr Assessor.

[*Goes out quickly through center door.*]

BEERMANN. You said yourself that there would be no use. I guess I'd better go.

STROEBEL [*perturbed*]. But do wait for the Commissioner.

BEERMANN. There is no use in my waiting. I . . . I did all I could . . . there seems to be no use . . . well, then. . . . Goodbye!

[*About to go through door on left, but the door is quickly opened and the* COMMISSIONER *appears with* BARON SCHMETTAU. *The former holds the door open for the* BARON. *After they have come in, he shuts the door.*]

COMMISSIONER [*to the* BARON]. If you please, Herr Baron . . . [*To* BEERMANN.] Ah . . . here is our President of the Society for the Suppression of Vice. [BEERMANN *bows slightly* — COMMISSIONER *continuing contemptuously.*] Well, have you accomplished your mission? [BEERMANN *nods.*] Are you satisfied with this arrest or would you like to have us do more? [*Angrily.*] Once for all, Sir, I forbid you to meddle with the affairs of this office. You can preach your principles wherever else you like, but here I will stand for no interference. [BEERMANN *timidly creeps along the wall, and bows himself out.*] [COMMISSIONER *to* BARON SCHMETTAU.] Whenever the police bungle anything, look for reformers.

SCHMETTAU [*with a glance at* STROEBEL]. Will you introduce me?

COMMISSIONER. Assessor Stroebel, — Freiherr von Schmettau, Adjutant to his Highness, Prince Emil.

[STROEBEL *clicks his heels together and bows deeply.* SCHMETTAU *thanks him curtly.*]

COMMISSIONER [*sharply*]. Herr Assessor, I have asked Herr Baron Schmettau to come with me in order that in his presence I might correct a pitiable lack of tact, which to my regret, and contrary to all my intentions, was perpetrated by Lieutenant Schmuttermaier.

SCHMETTAU. It was abominable.

COMMISSIONER. What orders did that man have?

STROEBEL [*nervously*]. Do you mean in the case of Hochstetter, Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER. Yes, sir, Madame de Hauteville. Who made the raid on her apartment?

STROEBEL. The raid?

COMMISSIONER. I hope before you arrested her you informed yourself exactly with whom you were dealing.

STROEBEL. Certainly . . .

COMMISSIONER. . . . And the result?

STROEBEL. I ascertained that this woman was violating public decency.

COMMISSIONER. I am going to ask you, Assessor, as my inferior in office, to confine yourself to more direct answers, *please.* What did the investigation disclose?

STROEBEL. That she received questionable visits from gentlemen.

COMMISSIONER. Questionable? Then does Schmuttermaier know who these gentlemen were?

STROEBEL. He does not . . .

COMMISSIONER. No? Did n't he investigate a matter which seemed so questionable to him?

STROEBEL. He just wanted to ascertain that these visits were meant for Hauteville.

COMMISSIONER. So — ? I have some truly competent officials. And who and what it was did not bother the man at all?

STROEBEL. I myself thought that that would be found out later.

COMMISSIONER. There are certain things in the world you would not be likely to look for and less likely to find. You have been treating this thing as though you were dealing with a common ordinary pickpocket. [*To* BARON SCHMETTAU.] You see it is just as I told you . . . the man did not have the slightest idea . . . [*To* STROEBEL.] Did this fellow, Schmuttermaier, see anyone in the flat or did he hear if anyone was there?

STROEBEL. No, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER [*to* BARON SCHMETTAU]. It is just as I told you . . .

STROEBEL. Furthermore, I have heard since that there was somebody in the apartment.

COMMISSIONER [*quickly*]. Who?

STROEBEL. That, I have been unable to find out yet, but Hauteville made several insinuations as though someone had been hidden in a wardrobe.

COMMISSIONER [*to* BARON SCHMETTAU]. To be sure — someone — was — To my profoundest regret, His Highness, our beloved Hereditary Prince Emil.

STROEBEL [*crushed*]. I . . . did n't have the slightest idea . . .

COMMISSIONER. You people ought to have an idea once in a while. If this Schmuttermaier had any ability, it would not have happened. But it is the old story, not a trace of independent ability and tact.

STROEBEL. I don't know what apology I can offer.

COMMISSIONER. Neither do I. Besides Herr Baron Schmettau himself was obliged to go through this very unpleasant incident.

SCHMETTAU. [SCHMETTAU *speaks very precisely but puts a slight emphasis on his s.*] I was completely dumbfounded. I cannot understand how it could happen. Just picture it . . . Lord knows . . . I was and am of the opinion that our young Highness must learn to know life. Faith, it is not my business to act as his pastor . . .

COMMISSIONER. If you please, Herr Baron, that goes without saying . . .

SCHMETTAU. That of course is merely my opinion. I am a man of the world and of affairs. I consider it fitting that his Highness should learn to know life . . .

COMMISSIONER. But I entirely share your opinion.

SCHMETTAU. A moment ago the word "decency" was used. In my position I can listen to such words from the pulpit, but outside of the church I deem them entirely out of place.

COMMISSIONER [*to Assessor*]. You used that expression.

SCHMETTAU. If anyone wants to claim that my bearing is not a proper one, he will have to prove it with a revolver in his hand.

STROEBEL. I did not think that the word would offend you.

SCHMETTAU. It did offend me. Such expressions are fitting in an asylum for feebleminded people. They should never be used to characterize the recreation of Cavaliers.

COMMISSIONER. May I put in a good word for my Assessor? It certainly was not his intention to offend you.

SCHMETTAU. It was not his intention. [*To the Assessor.*] Then I will assume that it was never said. [*The Assessor clicks his heels.*] I am somewhat nettled, but you cannot be surprised at that. You can imagine with what care I undertook this task. This Madame de Hauteville was recommended to me by reliable parties. She has good manners and does not talk.

COMMISSIONER. In her way, she certainly seems a very decent person.

SCHMETTAU. Absolutely. Since it was my belief that His Highness must learn to know life, I could not find a better place. [*To the* COMMISSIONER.] We understand each other?

COMMISSIONER. Certainly.

SCHMETTAU. Every guarantee against vulgarity; everything tip-top. Now picture it to yourself. I do all a man possibly can and this inconceivably awful scandal happens.

COMMISSIONER. It is the old story. These people have no tact.

SCHMETTAU. That does n't help me any. I am not trying to mix in your business.

That never occurred to me. But this does not help me one bit. The whole blame attaches to me. I simply will be told that such things should not have happened. That is an unheard-of business.

COMMISSIONER [*to Assessor*]. For which you are to blame.

SCHMETTAU. Had I a suspicion that this was contemplated, I would have informed you.

COMMISSIONER. If you only had!

SCHMETTAU. Who would think of such things? We all take it for granted that the police first of all respect protection!

STROEBEL. On my word of honor, Herr Baron. Not even in my dreams did I think of an occurrence like this.

SCHMETTAU [*squares his shoulders*]. Is it so difficult for you to think?

COMMISSIONER. That's just what I say. If a man knows his work thoroughly these things come to him. But people who are interested in the uplift movements are always in the clouds.

SCHMETTAU. This Lieutenant or whatever that fellow was, behaved as though he was collecting material for a socialist newspaper. His Highness was hardly in the house five minutes when there was a loud ringing. Then someone in heavy shoes ran up against the door like a drunken sailor. Madame de Hauteville breaks into the room and cries, "Your Highness, how unfortunate I am. The police are here," she says. "Leave them alone," I say, "they will go away presently." "Impossible," she says, "I can never permit His Highness to be found by the police in my place. I will take the blame upon myself entirely." Fancy the tact of that woman! "Impossible," she says, "that His Highness should be caught in my place"

COMMISSIONER. Really, very decent!

SCHMETTAU. Indeed it is. Immediately it dawns on me that she is right. The situation is getting terrible. That policeman is likely to demand His Highness' identification. What shall we do? Madame says, "For Heaven's sake hide in the wardrobe!" Outside, that fool is making quite a rumpus. He knocks, rings, shouts and barks. The neighborhood is getting aroused and heads are popping out from right and left and in the midst of this terrible commotion, there we stand — Highness and I. What shall we do? A few moments later, His Highness is cramped beside me in the wardrobe, in between different pieces of woman's apparel. With great difficulty we are able to draw our breath.

STROEBEL. If I had only had an inkling about it.

COMMISSIONER [*angrily*]. The police are expected to grasp conditions.

SCHMETTAU. Then what followed? In heavy-nailed shoes the men go from room to room. Doors are opened and slammed. The fellows use loud and coarse language, and three or four times they stand in front of the wardrobe. Upon my word, I actually feel how His Highness is perspiring. Just picture to yourself the situation if that brute had opened the closet! Just picture that and you can realize how much courage I had!

COMMISSIONER. You must have suffered terribly.

SCHMETTAU. What I suffered does not matter. In such moments one does not think of anything else but Highness. What an outrage! Finally the steps disappear. Madame Hauteville, who throughout behaved most decently and whose conduct was above reproach, is led away and Highness and I can leave the wardrobe where we spent an entire twenty minutes. And now I ask again, "How can such mistakes happen?"

COMMISSIONER [*to Assessor*]. You shall find the answer to this.

SCHMETTAU. Upstairs the woman is still in her cell. The newspapers are full of the scandal, and Highness suffers agonies when he realizes the possibilities which can develop at any moment.

COMMISSIONER. Herr Baron, you need not worry any longer. Now I am taking the matter entirely into my hands. [*Consulting his watch, he speaks with affected calmness.*] It is now a quarter to one. This evening at eight o'clock Madame de Hauteville will be set free and everything will be so arranged that her discharge will arouse no suspicion.

STROEBEL. But how are you going to do it . . . ?

COMMISSIONER. The details of this arrangement are your affair.

CURTAIN

ACT III

BEERMANN'S *library. Elegantly furnished. A desk is backed up against a large bay-window on the right. Opposite is a large book-case, and next to this a sofa. A long double door with small French panes somewhat to the left. On the left of stage a small table and a few comfortable leather chairs. On the right a simple door.*

[BEERMANN *enters through the middle door. He goes to the desk, unlocks a drawer and takes out the diary of* HAUTEVILLE. *He looks carefully about him, then picks out a volume of an encyclopedia from the book-case, opens it quickly and places the diary inside. He seats himself and begins to read. At this moment the center door is opened slowly, and* FRAU BEERMANN *stands on the threshold.*]

FRAU BEERMANN. Are you alone, Fritz?

BEERMANN [*frightened, slams the book so that the diary is concealed in it*]. Goodness, you did frighten me!

FRAU BEERMANN. I did not know how nervous you were until yesterday.

BEERMANN. Oh, what, nervous? I am overworked and irritable. Every single day, I have to prepare a new speech.

FRAU BEERMANN. Is it in that work that I disturbed you? Pardon me.

BEERMANN. Do you want anything?

FRAU BEERMANN. I just wanted to have a few serious words with you.

BEERMANN. But not necessarily at this moment. To-morrow or . . .

EFFIE [*opening the glass door, calls in*]. Oh, papa, did you forget?

BEERMANN [*uneasily*]. Forget what?

EFFIE [*entering*]. Were n't we to see the Indian dancer to-day?

BEERMANN. Well, it can't be done to-day.

EFFIE. That's a shame; I wanted so much to see her and to-night is her last appearance.

BEERMANN. Then we will wait until the next one comes along.

EFFIE. I don't see why just we have to have this bad luck.

BEERMANN [*with emphasis*]. Because I have more important things to do than to watch your hop, skip and jump.

EFFIE [*jolly*]. Oh, are n't you cranky?

BEERMANN. I am not at all disposed for such nonsense.

EFFIE [*going over to the desk, picks up the volume of the encyclopedia*]. All this comes from your politics; now I will simply confiscate your ammunition.

BEERMANN [*excited*]. Give me that book.

EFFIE [*jumping away*]. No, no, papa, you will only get sick.

BEERMANN [*shouts*]. I forbid these stupid jokes! Put that book down!

FRAU BEERMANN. What is the matter?

BEERMANN. I never could tolerate disobedient children, that's all.

EFFIE [*placing the book on the desk*]. Oh, pardon me, papa.

BEERMANN [*grasps the volume tightly and places it in the book-case*]. All fooling has its limits; don't forget that.

EFFIE. Now I suppose as a punishment, we can't see the dancer.

BEERMANN. Really, I would rather go with you than — sit here, but it is absolutely impossible.

FRAU BEERMANN. Go now, darling; I must talk to papa alone.

BEERMANN. But I have n't the time.

FRAU BEERMANN [*positively*]. That much of it you have.

EFFIE. Good-bye, papa dear. [*Goes out.*]

[FRAU BEERMANN *seats herself on the sofa next to the book-case.* BEERMANN *stands leaning with his back against the desk. Through the large window the evening sun can be seen so that* BEERMANN'S *face is in its light, while* FRAU BEERMANN *sits in the half-dusk.*]

BEERMANN. Lena dear, do we really have . . . ?

FRAU BEERMANN. We do.

BEERMANN. Can't it be postponed?

FRAU BEERMANN. I have postponed it many a year, but now it is high time.

BEERMANN [*disturbed*]. Many a year? What are you referring to?

FRAU BEERMANN. I have a request to make to you.

BEERMANN. With pleasure . . .

FRAU BEERMANN. Don't make a laughing-stock of your family.

BEERMANN. In what way?

FRAU BEERMANN. Don't make a laughing-stock of your family, I beg you.

BEERMANN. Please don't talk in riddles.

FRAU BEERMANN. These are not very great riddles to you.

BEERMANN. Speak plainly, won't you?

FRAU BEERMANN. No. I am not going to speak more plainly.

BEERMANN. As your husband, I demand it.

FRAU BEERMANN. N-no.

BEERMANN. That is very sad. There should be no secrets at all between husband and wife.

FRAU BEERMANN. Is this a principle again? Fancy all these great secrets! [BEERMANN *shrugs his shoulders.*] No. Now take it for granted that I know a thing or two about you.

BEERMANN [*with anxiety*]. You?

FRAU BEERMANN. Several things. Some which you must know only too well. After all, that principle of yours has not been violated. There remain no secrets whatever between us.

BEERMANN. I assure you I shall not rack my brains about it.

FRAU BEERMANN. Nor would I want you to regard me as sitting in judgment on your acts.

BEERMANN [*with a false pathos*]. Instead of telling me freely and frankly of the gossip you have heard about me; then I could defend myself.

FRAU BEERMANN. That is just what I want to avoid. To me it appears somewhat childish when a man tries to justify . . .

BEERMANN [*just as before*]. In this manner, the lowest gossip can destroy the happiness of any family.

FRAU BEERMANN [*seriously*]. Fritz, really, there is no one listening to us just now.

BEERMANN. You are not taking me in earnest.

FRAU BEERMANN. No, and it is our good fortune that I am not. At least, my good fortune.

BEERMANN. You call that good fortune? I might have expected something different from you.

FRAU BEERMANN. No, sir, you did not. If you will be honest with me, you will admit that. This many a year, we have been playing a common farce. You acted the true Christian head of the family and I the all-believing audience.

BEERMANN. How nice!

FRAU BEERMANN. Not nice but it's true. Perhaps the fault is not entirely ours, for we learned it from our parents. You men are supposed to impress us with your greatness and we women are to stand by and admire.

BEERMANN. Do you find that impossible?

FRAU BEERMANN. Even the best Christian family principles must have some foundation. What was I supposed to admire?

BEERMANN. You ask that now?

FRAU BEERMANN. Perhaps I gave it up sooner than others. But that is due to our relationship. We were always together. Where is a man to get pose and character enough to last him for twenty-four hours every day?

BEERMANN. So that is about your conception of our married life?

FRAU BEERMANN. That is it exactly.

BEERMANN. And after all the years . . .

FRAU BEERMANN. I acquired it rather early.

BEERMANN. Now, after twenty-six years you declare that you are unhappy.

FRAU BEERMANN. No, Fritz, it has not led us to unhappiness. There has been no sudden shattering of an ideal. Our marriage was not an ideal and . . . don't feel offended . . . your personality was never so immaculate, that one stain more or less would spoil the effect.

BEERMANN [*excited*]. But there must be some sort of reason back of all these reproaches?

FRAU BEERMANN. If you think them reproaches, then we do not understand each other.

BEERMANN. What else are they?

FRAU BEERMANN. I meant it merely as a request. Do not bring your family into ridicule.

BEERMANN. You are playing hide and seek all the time. In what way am I likely to do that?

FRAU BEERMANN. With your moral priesthood to which you have absolutely no right.

BEERMANN. No right?

FRAU BEERMANN. Not the slightest one. But you are creating enemies who will make a laughing-stock of us all, if they find out certain things. Those things can be found out whether we like it or not.

BEERMANN [*forced laughter*]. Lena dear, I believe you are jealous.

FRAU BEERMANN [*quietly*]. Jealous, of what? [*Short pause.*] I hope that you credit me with at least good taste enough not to be jealous of my so-called right, and . . . otherwise what can I lose? No, Fritz, I am not jealous. [*Short pause, it is getting darker.*] I had to get accustomed to it; that's true. This secrecy, the petty lies and the false gravity irritated me a little bit too much at first, but I made an effort so that I could still retain a feeling of comradeship. I overcame it daily, because — well, because I never really took you seriously. [*Pause.*]

BEERMANN [*with a false pathos*]. Lena, dear, do you realize what things you are saying?

FRAU BEERMANN. Yes, fully.

BEERMANN [*as above*]. That is dreadful. Every word is a . . . catastrophe! I have until to-day, I have until this hour, believed in our established quiet happiness. Now shall all this pass away?

FRAU BEERMANN. Nothing but your confidence in my blindness shall pass away.

BEERMANN. Think it over. There can be no real family life after people lose faith in each other.

FRAU BEERMANN. Oh, a person gets used even to that.

BEERMANN. No. Lena, listen. Someone has been telling you tales and I cannot defend myself, because I don't know what I am accused of. You must tell me everything right now. I demand it of you.

FRAU BEERMANN. If I wanted to do that, I would have to begin "many, many years ago . . . "

BEERMANN. Well, why did n't you do it then?

FRAU BEERMANN. You can well understand, I had my reasons.

BEERMANN. For such silence there can be no reasons.

FRAU BEERMANN. I could shut my eyes and remain silent. That was my privilege. But if I had spoken out and permitted you to appease me . . . no, that was something beyond me. To do that I would have been obliged to lie and for that I, for one, have not the ability. [BEERMANN *makes a motion.*] No, do not interrupt me. These things will have no consequences as long as I do not wish them to, but if I should name them, then they would have.

BEERMANN. Then shall I let this suspicion rest upon me?

FRAU BEERMANN. Yes.

BEERMANN. How coldly you speak. If what you suspect were true, you could not be so indifferent about it.

FRAU BEERMANN. Do the by-laws of your Society prescribe that in cases like these the wife shall be unhappy?

BEERMANN. Imagine! The many years that you and I have lived together and you had these suspicions right along and never said a word about them. Why do you speak to-day?

FRAU BEERMANN. Because you have reached the point where our friendship for one another may break. Everything I see and hear from you now hurts me. You speak in a tone of strictness, which must be unpleasant even to you. For weeks past there has been nothing around me but lies. What you say to me, all that you say to the children, and what you preached here publicly last night. Every word hurts my ears and urges me to contradict you; I am silent and by doing that I endorse your lies.

BEERMANN. But, Lena . . .

FRAU BEERMANN. Finally when your

every glance is artificial, each motion of yours is a pose. Then it is unbearable. Add to that my anxiety for our children. How shall they still retain faith in us, if through an accident their eyes are opened? I have remained silent all this time for their sake and now you are inviting the whole world to speak. I cannot continue to live this life of worry and hypocrisy. All that I have already overcome awakens again and appears to me more ugly than ever before. I do not know if I can still believe in your good fellowship and remain your friend.

[*She rises and goes slowly to the door.*]

BEERMANN. I do not seem to know you any more. During our entire married life, you have not spoken as seriously as in the last fifteen minutes.

FRAU BEERMANN. That perhaps was my great mistake. But I have paid for it.

[*She opens the door.*]

BEERMANN. Lena dear, have you nothing further to tell me?

FRAU BEERMANN. I just beg of you; do not bring your family into ridicule. [*Exit.*]

[BEERMANN *for a while remains standing, lost in thought; then he turns on the electric light, sighing, goes over to the book-case, takes out the volume of the encyclopedia wherein the diary of* MADAME DE HAUTEVILLE *is hidden, opens it and reads standing. A knock on the door. Frightened, he quickly hides the diary in his side pocket.*]

BEERMANN. Come in.

[JUSTIZRAT HAUSER *enters on the left.*]

HAUSER. Lord; good evening.

BEERMANN [*hurrying toward him*]. Lord; how glad I am that you have come!

HAUSER. Has anything happened?

BEERMANN. N— no.

HAUSER. I received your message that you must see me to-night without fail.

BEERMANN. Yes, I was at your house twice.

HAUSER. Unfortunately, I was not there. [*He has taken off his overcoat and is laying it on a chair.*] Tell me, you seem to me all upset.

BEERMANN. I am upset.

HAUSER. I suppose that is why you sent for me. Well, then, what is it?

BEERMANN. Have a seat, please. [*They sit down to the left on the sofa.*] I must begin a little way back . . . Have a cigar? [*He goes over to the humidor, takes out a box of cigars and offers it to* HAUSER, *who takes one.*] I must begin a little way back . . . Can you remember the subject we discussed last night?

HAUSER. The genuinely righteous moral life? [*He lights his cigar.*] Of course, I remember it. Such sermons are not easily forgotten.

BEERMANN. Do you know I got the impression that you have a rather liberal viewpoint.

HAUSER. Liberal?

BEERMANN. I mean that you are not a prude.

HAUSER. I am an old lawyer, you know, and just out of sheer habit contradict people. I made myself blacker than I actually am. So, if you have scruples on my account . . .

BEERMANN. I merely mentioned it because you understand life and I must speak to someone who judges more liberally than our narrow-minded *bourgeois*.

HAUSER. More liberally than you judged last night?

BEERMANN. I was overzealous, but don't let us talk about it. I want to ask you for advice. [*Short pause.*] You lawyers are bound to respect professional secrets?

HAUSER. We must respect them.

BEERMANN. What I am about to tell you, you will probably find most astounding, but it is to be considered absolutely confidential. Even though your client confesses a crime, you are not permitted to divulge the information?

HAUSER. What a careful criminal you are!

BEERMANN. It is possible that you will find this information most unpleasant.

HAUSER [*bends and talks in a low voice*]. Now don't worry about me, Beermann. I will know how to protect your interests. The law gives me the right to remain silent in any event.

BEERMANN. Well, then . . . [*nervously runs his fingers through his hair*] I really have to begin a little way back. The last few days I have been thinking a great deal about monogamy. I am surely the last person to doubt the high moral value of the marriage vow, but there is something to be said on the other side. It is indeed a very ticklish theme to discuss.

HAUSER. Suppose then that we skip the prologue and the few opening chapters and start at once with the affair of Madame Hauteville.

BEERMANN. How do you know . . .?

HAUSER. I suspected. You probably are not the first one who has come to confess to me. Since last night many consciences have been jolted. So you, too, belong to that crowd?

BEERMANN. You ask yourself how such things are possible?

HAUSER. No, sir, I never ask myself such stupid questions.

BEERMANN. You have always believed that an undisturbed happiness prevailed in my family.

HAUSER [*quickly*]. Beermann, I resent that! Do not try to make yourself interesting.

BEERMANN. Don't take it the wrong way. I am not blaming anybody. I just want to . . .

HAUSER. You even want to find moral justification for your immorality.

BEERMANN. I know well enough that it is unjustifiable. I have been saying that to myself a hundred thousand times. Do not think that I overcame my principles so easily.

HAUSER. All you had to overcome was your timidity.

BEERMANN [*sighing deeply*]. If you only knew.

HAUSER. Of course you did not land on the primrose path with both feet, but you climbed carefully over the fence — just as befits a man of your *embonpoint*.

BEERMANN. I expected something better from you than mere mocking.

HAUSER. What do you want me to do? Shall I weep because you have sinned? Why? What good would it do you? That is the way of your kind. As long as no one has proofs against you, your virtue must always be under the spotlight, but the very minute you trip up, some peculiar background of justification ought to be invented for the smallest sin. No, my dear friend. The world's moral system will not go to pieces just because you slipped and broke your nose.

BEERMANN. You cannot realize what suffering you are inflicting upon me right now.

HAUSER. Now please don't make long speeches. You did not call me here to grant you absolution. You want me to help you to quash this affair.

BEERMANN [*jumps up quickly from his chair*]. Yes, you must do that. Good Lord, I beg you. I am in a terrible position. You have not the slightest idea how nervous I am.

HAUSER. Will you please sit down and stop exaggerating?

BEERMANN [*sits down*]. No man living can have sufficient imagination to enlarge on this. Imagine it! Any moment the police are likely to come here and arrest me.

HAUSER [*seriously*]. Have you been carrying on so badly at Hauteville's?

BEERMANN. No. Not there. That is not worth while mentioning.

HAUSER. Why then do you fear the police? That's all nonsense. Now just consider everything quietly and calmly. By the way, has your wife any suspicions . . . ?

BEERMANN. Of this affair? I don't think so. She has just a general one . . . but what's the use of bothering with trifles! You know that this stupid woman kept a diary, and that they found it in her apartment.

HAUSER. Assuredly I know it. Without that diary we would not have so many penitents in the City.

BEERMANN. Imagine my position. I know positively that my name is in that book. It means that I am simply done for by the cursed thing.

HAUSER. Is it so certain that your name is in the book?

BEERMANN [*loudly*]. Yes, sir.

HAUSER. It may be possible that . . .

BEERMANN. It is not at all possible. My name is there. Shall I quietly sit and wait until I am ruined? You know that I would be ruined if it became public. Fancy, I, the candidate for the Reichstag; I, the President of the Society for the Suppression of Vice! All the papers would be full of it.

HAUSER. Oh, yes, it would be quite interesting.

BEERMANN. Then think of the consequences here in the City! In the family! Why, I would be killed outright! Lord, how I tried to hammer it into the head of that stupid man in the Police Department so he could understand what terrible mischief this will make.

HAUSER [*frightened*]. You went to Police Headquarters?

BEERMANN. Of course, I was there.

HAUSER. Did you confess?

BEERMANN. How can you suppose that? [*Sits down again.*] I spoke for the others. I explained to the official that he is showing up the influential element; that he is injuring the established order of society, — but [*he touches his forehead with his palm*] that fellow has nothing but police ordinances in his head.

HAUSER. Shouting will not help us a bit. Remain cool and collected. One thing is important, at this moment. Has the diary reached the District Attorney's office?

BEERMANN. No, it has not.

HAUSER. Well, as long as it remains in the Police Department there are still possibilities.

BEERMANN. It is not in the Police Department either.

HAUSER. Of course it is there. Where else should it be?

BEERMANN [*indicating his side pocket*]. Here.

HAUSER [*amazed*]. What?

BEERMANN [*takes the diary out of his side pocket and places it on the table*]. Here it is.

HAUSER. So, this is the celebrated diary of Madame Hauteville. [BEERMANN *nods.*] Who gave it to you?

BEERMANN. Nobody. I just took it.

HAUSER. You mean; you sto . . .

BEERMANN. . . . Stole it, yes, sir.

HAUSER [*pulls back his chair and breaks into a loud laugh*]. You did that! [*He laughs.*] . . . Say, that's pretty good. Now I am beginning to respect you. Confound it, I would never have given you credit for a stunt like this.

[*He laughs and slaps his knee.*]

BEERMANN. Laugh, while I am dying of fright.

HAUSER. Don't spoil my good impression of you! I am on the point of admiring you. [*He laughs again.*] Let me apologize. I always held you as a wishy-washy *bourgeois* and now you go and pull this thing off.

BEERMANN. You had better give me some advice. I have not had a quiet moment since I took the book. I want to destroy it but how can I? If I tear it up the pieces will be found.

HAUSER. Burn it.

BEERMANN. Where? There is no fire in the house, except in the kitchen range. If I hide it, I shall always have to run to and fro to see if it is there, and I feel less safe if I have it on my person. Then I have always a feeling as though that thing were bulging out my pocket; and the police must be missing it by this time.

HAUSER. Oh, tear out the page on which your name appears and send it back anonymously.

BEERMANN. Impossible. My name appears on almost every second page.

HAUSER. Oh . . . so.

BEERMANN. What shall I do when the police ask me for the book?

HAUSER. There is only one way; you know nothing about it.

BEERMANN. But they will be dead certain that I have it.

HAUSER. Remain firm. For Heaven's sake, don't fall into the trap that by confessing you will improve this fine job.

[*A loud and prolonged ringing of the electric bell is heard.*]

BEERMANN [*frightened, exclaims*]. There, do you hear that?

HAUSER. Some visitor, I suppose.

BEERMANN. This is no time to make visits. [*Anxiously picking up the diary.*] What shall I do with that damned thing? [*Takes out a volume of the encyclopedia and*

wants to hide the diary in it, but hesitates, and then puts the volume back on the shelf.] Lord, where shall I put it?

HAUSER. Come, give it to me.

[BEERMANN *gives him the book and* HAUSER *puts it in his side pocket.*]

HAUSER. No one will search me for it.

BEERMANN. Stay here with me . . . please.

HAUSER. If it gives you any pleasure, yes; but man alive, pull yourself together. Suppose it really were the police; you are trembling all over. [*A knock on the door.*]

BEERMANN [*crouching*]. Quiet now. [*Another knock.*] Come in.

[BETTY *comes in from the left and hands* BEERMANN *a visiting card.*]

BETTY. The gentleman says it is very urgent.

BEERMANN. [*With a trembling hand* BEERMANN *takes up the visiting card and reads.*] Professor Wasner. [*He sighs audibly and then says with forced vigor.*] Show the gentleman up. [BETTY *exit.*]

BEERMANN. And this has been my state of mind for the past six hours.

HAUSER [*offering him his hand*]. Now be brave, my dear friend, and even if they should come to you, just deny it outright. You'll know how to lie. A man of such rare abilities . . . Good night.

[*Goes out on the left. In the doorway, he almost collides with* PROFESSOR WASNER. *They greet each other.*]

WASNER [*wears a cape, the left corner thrown picturesquely over his right shoulder, holds a large slouch hat in his hand. His hair is disheveled. His flaxen beard falls on his chest*]. I am here in regard to the most remarkable matter a man ever came to consult another about.

BEERMANN [*very nervous*]. Must it be today, Herr Professor?

WASNER. The situation permits of no delay.

BEERMANN. But it is getting so late.

WASNER. I admit that this is hardly the proper time to make visits. Nevertheless, I entreat you to hear me. [BEERMANN *seats himself at the desk, takes out a large handkerchief and presses it against his forehead.* WASNER *remains standing and continues.*] For many years, as you well know, I undertook the task of collecting all publications which have been undermining public morals. I daresay to-day, that my collection is most complete and that I have unquestionably proven the harm of pornographic literature. What corrupting influence this temptation has through suggestion and imagination can to-day no longer be doubted, because — [*an impressive pause;* WASNER *lowers his voice*] — I myself fell a victim to it. [BEERMANN *remains in his apathetic attitude. Pause.*] I can well understand that you lack words. I, too, became, on account of it, much disgusted with my character. I asked myself if I still have the right to participate in the moral salvation of our people and I have decided affirmatively only after a thorough examination. [*Pause.*]

BEERMANN [*absent-mindedly*]. Yes . . . yes . . . Herr Professor.

WASNER. You are entitled to know everything. Only spare me the details. Briefly stated, one day I could not view my collection as objectively as usual and through a friend I was induced to make a most damnable visit. I assure you that I simply loathe that fellow.

BEERMANN. But just why are you telling me all this?

WASNER. Because together we have fought against immorality shoulder to shoulder. I ask you if you still deem me worthy to strive for our common ideal.

BEERMANN. For my part, go as far as you like, I won't stop you.

WASNER. Then you will not deny me your assistance?

BEERMANN. Suppose we discuss all this to-morrow, Herr Professor?

WASNER. To-morrow will be too late. [BEERMANN *falls back into his chair in an attitude of apathy.*] After my false step I became convinced that it is my duty to protect others from this temptation. My feeling of duty became stronger until finally I wrote a letter to be exact — an anonymous letter — to the police, wherein I de-

manded emphatically that they put an end to the misconduct of this person.

BEERMANN [*now attentive*]. Really that was not nice.

WASNER. I wanted to assure myself that within I still had the right to belong to the Society for the Suppression of Vice.

BEERMANN. I consider that rather mean. You should always be grateful.

WASNER. This very feeling would have made me feel still more guilty. [BEERMANN *shrugs his shoulders nervously.*] But now I come to the reason for my being here. My information had results . . . This creature was arrested and to-day after dinner my false friend comes to tell me that he had not been careful, had mentioned to her my name, and I am certainly indexed in the book she kept. This book was found in her place by the police.

BEERMANN [*jumping up*]. What's her name?

WASNER. Hauteville.

BEERMANN. So, it is you to whom we are indebted for this scandal. [*Angrily.*] Do you fully realize what you have accomplished? How many respectable fathers of families you have brought to the very verge of despair?

WASNER. I know it.

BEERMANN. You don't.

WASNER. I came here for that very reason.

BEERMANN [*not understanding him*]. What?

WASNER. I came here to request you on behalf of the others to call to-night a meeting of the Executive Committee. The Society must do everything in its power to keep this case out of court.

BEERMANN. Why the devil did you write that anonymous letter?

WASNER. Listen to me, I beg of you. Someone is involved in this who is very dear to you. As soon as I received the information, I hastened to Police Headquarters immediately and wanted to intervene there as the representative of the Society for the Suppression of Vice. But when I mentioned that name I was very formally thrown out. On the steps, whom do you think I met but our mutual friend, Kommerzienrat Bolland! He too had been in the Commissioner's office and had the same bad luck. I told him my troubles and he admitted to me that he also had been lured into the den of this Siren.

BEERMANN. Kommerzienrat!

WASNER. Unfortunately. But that is something I can't at all account for. He hardly could have been led into temptation through a collection of documentary exhibits.

BEERMANN. And what do you want of me now?

WASNER. Our friend sends me to you. He would have come himself but the shock threw him into a sick-bed. He entreats you urgently to call a meeting of the Executive Committee, immediately. We have very influential people in our midst who must bring pressure to bear on the Department of the Interior in order to hush up this affair.

BEERMANN. If only you had not written that anonymous letter.

WASNER. I felt a moral duty to do it.

BEERMANN. And now it is our moral duty to patch up this matter.

[BETTY *enters on the left.*]

BETTY [*hands* BEERMANN *a calling card*]. The gentleman says it is very urgent.

BEERMANN [*reads*]. "Assessor Stroebel." [*Frightened; to* BETTY.] Tell him I am out of town. [BETTY *about to leave.*] No, tell him I am sick — or, Betty, show the gentleman up. [BETTY *goes out.*]

WASNER. At what time shall the Executive Committee meet?

BEERMANN [*excited*]. Oh, leave me alone with your Executive Committee.

WASNER. You must not desert us in our hour of peril. A leader's fate is bound up with his followers according to German tradition.

BEERMANN [*as before*]. It is all your fault anyway.

WASNER. Shall I then tell our sick friend that we cannot count on your support?

BEERMANN. If I am so situated that I can, I will be over to see him in an hour. I can't promise you more now.

[Assessor Stroebel *enters on left and remains standing in the doorway.*]

Stroebel [*very seriously*]. Herr Beermann, I must speak to you privately.

Beermann [*confused*]. You — with me? Well, since you must, I suppose you must.

Wasner. Well, I am going. [Wasner *exit left.* Stroebel *enters.* Wasner *remains standing on the threshold.*] The Executive Committee will be called to the sick bed of our friend. We shall await our chairman.

[*He goes.* Stroebel *and* Beermann *remain standing, silent, facing each other.*]

Stroebel. You are surprised, I presume, that I come here at this unusual hour.

Beermann. Why should I be surprised?

Stroebel. You will have to pardon me. The matter which brings me here is unusual and urgent.

Beermann. Oh, don't mention it.

[*A short pause. They both clear their throats.*]

Stroebel. You were in my office this morning . . .

Beermann. Was I?

Stroebel. Why, of course you were in my office this morning.

Beermann. Oh, yes, yes. I remember we had a short conference. I must ask you to excuse me, Herr Assessor. I am suffering with an awful ringing in the ears. It makes me so forgetful.

Stroebel. But I hope you still remember what we spoke about.

Beermann. Very dimly. If you would remind me of it perhaps it will not be so difficult.

Stroebel. You came on account of the Hauteville case.

Beermann. So-o?

Stroebel. Or the Hochstetter . . .

Beermann. Well, since you say so, it must be so.

Stroebel. First I thought you came to express your satisfaction that we had caught this person . . .

Beermann. No, that was not my purpose.

Stroebel. I am sure it was n't. I was quite surprised that you were not satisfied with her arrest.

Beermann. Why should n't I not be satisfied with her arrest?

Stroebel [*nervously*]. But, Herr Beermann, you will recollect how we discussed the diary.

Beermann [*quickly*]. A diary? I know nothing about it.

Stroebel. You even became quite excited about it.

Beermann. I know nothing whatever of any diary. You never showed me any book at all. Of that I am very positive.

Stroebel [*in despair*]. It is just my confounded luck to find you in this predicament. You are evidently suffering.

Beermann. An awful ringing in my ears —

Stroebel. I would leave you at once if the least delay were possible. But I simply must speak to you about it to-night. Can't you get relief by taking medicine?

Beermann. No medicine can help me. I can only tell you that I do not know anything about any diary.

Stroebel. Lord, Lord, leave the diary out of it altogether. It is absolutely of no importance.

Beermann. It is of no importance?

Stroebel. Of course, it is safely locked in my desk . . .

Beermann. Is that so? Well, then, I can't understand why you hurried to see me to-night.

Stroebel [*very embarrassed*]. But that is exactly what I wanted to explain to you. But how shall I do it? You scarcely remember any more than that you were in my office this morning. It is incredible how misfortune has been persecuting me since noon.

Beermann [*greatly relieved*]. Well, calm yourself, Herr Assessor. It will come out right in the end.

Stroebel [*downcast*]. No, it can never come out right.

Beermann [*soothingly*]. Sit down nicely in this chair — so! I'll sit next to you here — so! . . . And now let us see about it. [*They seat themselves on the left, up*

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stage.] Do you know, I am beginning to feel much better already. So the diary is in your desk.

STROEBEL. For my part, let it be buried a thousand feet deep. For God's sake, don't talk of it any more. It takes us away from my subject.

BEERMANN. That's right. We shan't talk of it any more. Now let me see, I called on you about the Hauteville case . . .

STROEBEL. And on this occasion you demanded that the police suppress the matter.

BEERMANN. Quite true, I did that.

STROEBEL. There you are! And that's why I thought you were mostly interested in avoiding scandal.

BEERMANN. In what way?

STROEBEL. Not personally, but from a wholly humanitarian or civic standpoint. You even told me that just because of your position as President of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, you regarded it as your duty to keep this matter out of the courts.

BEERMANN. Only for the common welfare.

STROEBEL. And out of consideration for public opinion. I had the impression that these considerations were of great importance to you.

BEERMANN. And still are. Do you think I change my views? I repeat to you, that I would consider this court trial a misfortune because it would be contrary to the established order of Society.

STROEBEL. Then we are agreed in our principles!

BEERMANN. You too?

STROEBEL. Absolutely.

BEERMANN. I thought that you had . . . this forenoon . . .

STROEBEL. And I was also mistaken because you did n't seem to remember. But at any rate, we agree in our principles. [*They shake hands.*] Although that does not accomplish anything still it is a great relief to me that we understand each other. I am coming now to the real purpose of my visit. [*He clears his throat.*] Herr Beermann, I must demand your word of honor that not a syllable of what I tell you will ever pass your lips.

BEERMANN. My sacred word of honor.

STROEBEL. These are official secrets, perhaps even State secrets, and a single careless word might have tremendous consequences.

BEERMANN. You can depend on me.

STROEBEL. Not even to your family.

BEERMANN. Not a breath.

STROEBEL. To tell you: Since you were at my office this morning there were most remarkable developments, quite unique in their way. But I have your word of honor — have I not?

BEERMANN. My sacred word of honor.

STROEBEL [*bends low and protects his mouth with his hand and whispers*]. That very night when Madame Hauteville's apartment was raided, without our knowledge a very distinguished person was hidden there.

BEERMANN. I can imagine.

STROEBEL [*loudly*]. You can't imagine it at all. [*Whispering.*] Our young heir, Prince Emil, was there himself.

BEERMANN [*surprised, slapping his thigh*]. Now what do you think of that!

STROEBEL [*loudly*]. You can understand that I am not telling you this as a mere bit of gossip, but certain important reasons compel me to. That which you mentioned before about the reasons of State was fulfilled. Fulfilled to the very letter. All possibilities of prosecuting this person at present have simply gone up in the air.

BEERMANN [*starting from his seat*]. Then everything is all right.

STROEBEL. There's nothing "all right" about it. Keep your seat, Herr Beermann. Of course our desire to prosecute has disappeared, but the lady in question is still at headquarters and we don't know how to get rid of her.

BEERMANN. Madame Hauteville? [STROEBEL *nods.*] Just forget to lock the door and she'll vanish.

STROEBEL [*shaking his head*]. No, . . . for a great many reasons. Do you think I did not try hard to find a solution? First, if we openly permit her to escape, the whole City will know it to-morrow; the press will take it up and there will be a far greater scandal than the court proceedings would

cause. No, sir, at least the letter of the law must be carried out. Madame Hauteville must give a bond. She will be set free and then she must escape. That's the only way we can protect ourselves from criticism. Do you understand me?

BEERMANN. You mean . . . about the bail?

STROEBEL. Yes, sir, the bail first of all. But if it were only the bail! Just think! She does n't want to go at all.

BEERMANN. She does not want to . . . ?

STROEBEL. No. I gave her another hearing this afternoon and told her that we don't care to bother with her any more. "Listen," I said to her, "you are lucky. Give bail of Five Thousand Marks, and you will be free in ten minutes. There is a ten o'clock train for Brussels to-morrow morning." [*The bell in the hall rings.*] What do you suppose she said? She laughed. She knows very well why we are so humane, but she will not give a bond of five marks, even if by luck she had it. She says that she has already prepared for a trial. I talked to her politely, then rudely. She will not budge. She laughs and laughs and that's all.

[*Knock at the door. Maid enters with a visiting card.*]

BEERMANN [*to the maid*]. What does it all mean to-night, at this hour? This is not a hotel. [*Takes the card and reads.*] Freiherr Botho von Schmettau, Herr auf Zurnberg?

STROEBEL. Do receive this gentleman, please.

BEERMANN. Now, while we are conferring?

STROEBEL. Yes, now, if you please.

BEERMANN [*to the maid*]. Ask the gentleman to come in. [BETTY *exit.*]

STROEBEL. He is Adjutant to the young Prince. I told him I was going to see you, and you can realize how upset he is.

BEERMANN. If it affords you pleasure.

STROEBEL. It does. The entire responsibility rests on me and I at least must show that I have left nothing undone.

[*Knock on the door.*]

BEERMANN. Come in.

[SCHMETTAU *enters.*]

SCHMETTAU. Good evening.

STROEBEL [*rising.* BEERMANN *rises also*]. May I introduce you gentlemen? Herr Beermann, the banker — Herr Baron Schmettau.

SCHMETTAU. We have already had a glimpse of each other to-day.

BEERMANN. Yes, I remember.

SCHMETTAU. You are the President of the Local Morality Club. Before we go further I must tell you that I do not at all agree with those views . . .

STROEBEL [*interrupting with anxiety*]. Herr Baron, may I call your attention to the fact that Herr Beermann, personally, is far above these narrow theories.

SCHMETTAU. I am glad to hear it. Besides as theories they're not so bad.

BEERMANN. As theories! That's what I say.

SCHMETTAU. Well, there you are!

STROEBEL. Herr Beermann is also the candidate of the local Conservative-Liberal Coalition.

SCHMETTAU. Then he is certainly no stickler for high-flown notions. I should be right glad if we understood each other. And how far are you, gentlemen?

STROEBEL. In principles we are agreed.

BEERMANN. Absolutely.

SCHMETTAU. Then we shall have no difficulty in finding the right solution.

STROEBEL. I have taken Herr Beermann into our confidence.

SCHMETTAU. That was a very disagreeable mishap, was it not? Very bad. Whoever has any patriotism can realize it.

BEERMANN. Herr Baron was also . . .

SCHMETTAU. Locked in the closet.

STROEBEL. Permit me to revert to the facts. I was just telling Herr Beermann that this Hauteville woman refuses to leave. She boasts that she has not the bail and even if she had it, she would not pay it.

SCHMETTAU. Confound her! She controls the situation.

STROEBEL. Now we come to the most difficult part of it. She says that if she is compelled to leave the City and is deprived of her livelihood, she wants proper damages

for it. Of course I told the woman that this, to say the least, was an extortionate demand. Well then, she says, we will have a trial in court.

BEERMANN. The fox! She knows well that's out of the question.

SCHMETTAU. I am very grateful to you for these sentiments.

STROEBEL. I asked what she considered proper damages. "Ten thousand marks," she says. I almost lost my senses. With the necessary bail that would make fifteen thousand marks.

SCHMETTAU. In the end perhaps that is not so gigantic.

STROEBEL. Who is going to pay it?

SCHMETTAU. Not we, of course. Our State is a poor paymaster.

STROEBEL. Here is a fine mess, which I cannot solve — at least not I. Herr Beermann, you said yourself that your Society for the Suppression of Vice is vitally interested in the undisturbed maintenance of the popular belief in morality. For the members of your Society, it ought to be quite easy to collect that sum. I know of no other way.

BEERMANN. [*With folded hands he stands in a pensive mood.*] The Executive Committee is expecting its chairman. And I know of a professor who alone ought to pay an extra thousand for a letter he wrote. [*To the others.*] Gentlemen, briefly speaking, I will do it. On behalf of the Society, I pledge this sum.

SCHMETTAU. Herr von Beermann, I can only say that you have acted honorably. The House of Emil the Benevolent knows on whom to confer an order.

[*He offers his hand.*]

BEERMANN. But let me assure you, Herr Baron, I did not do it expecting a reward.

CURTAIN

LIVING HOURS

By ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

Translated by GRACE ISABEL COLBRON

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CHARACTERS

Anton Hausdorfer
Heinrich
Borromäus, *gardener*

LIVING HOURS

A carefully tended little garden in a suburb of Vienna. A small house fills the right side of the stage, the veranda towards the garden. Three steps lead down from the veranda. Under a spreading tree on the left side of the stage, down towards the front, is a little table surrounded by several chairs, one of them a comfortable armchair. A high iron railing running from the left side at back over to the house, separates the garden from the street. Beyond are the trees and grassy stretches of a park. It is early Autumn, near the close of day. Deep stillness broods over the garden. BORROMÄUS, *the gardener, is working at a flower-bed. He is an old man, with rather longish gray hair.* ANTON HAUSDORFER *comes slowly down the steps from the veranda.* HAUSDORFER *is nearly sixty, smooth-shaven, with close-cut, gray hair but young eyes. He wears a quiet dark suit, easy in fit, but well made, and a broad-brimmed, dark straw hat.*

HAUSDORFER. Good evening, Borromäus.

BORROMÄUS. Good evening, sir. You've been to the city this afternoon, have n't you, sir?

HAUSDORFER. No.

BORROMÄUS. I thought maybe, sir, because you did n't take your coffee out here in the arbor this afternoon either.

HAUSDORFER. No, I did not go to town. I was in the house, lying on the sofa. I had a bit of a headache. What are you doing now? You'll soon have the entire garden turned over.

BORROMÄUS. Surely, sir, it's quite necessary. We may have a frost any night now. I'm not lettin' these mild nights deceive me, once it's October. Do you remember the Autumn of '93, sir? We sat outdoors that evening, the 28th of October it was, and next morning at three there was a heavy frost. And in '87 and '88 it was the same way. No, sir, I'm not lettin' these fine days deceive me.

HAUSDORFER. Quite right, Borromäus. [*He looks on at the work.*] And what shall we plant here now?

[*He falls into deep thought and pays little heed to the answer.*]

BORROMÄUS. Just what I wanted to talk to you about, sir. I went over to see Franz today —

HAUSDORFER [*absently*]. Who?

BORROMÄUS [*surprised*]. Why, Franz, sir, — Baron Weiseneck's gardener across the way. He thinks a bit of himself but he knows a bit, too. He's studied it all in books, twenty or more of them he has on his shelf, so I don't mind askin' him a question now and then —

HAUSDORFER [*he has not been listening*]. Yes, yes, — you ought to do that —

BORROMÄUS. Do what, sir?

HAUSDORFER. Whatever he told you. I'm quite willing you should.

BORROMÄUS [*still more surprised*]. But, sir, I have n't said anything yet —

HAUSDORFER [*as before*]. It will be the right thing to do, no doubt.

BORROMÄUS [*now quite alarmed*]. Why, sir —

HAUSDORFER [*as if awakening*]. What is it?

BORROMÄUS. Oh, sir, I understand — if I may take the liberty of asking, sir — I'm sure it's that Mrs. Councillor is worse again. [HAUSDORFER *does not answer,* BORROMÄUS *becomes embarrassed.*] I thought maybe, sir, since it's over three weeks that the lady was out here the last time —

HAUSDORFER. She is dead — I thank you for your sympathy — Mrs. Councillor is dead. [*He sits down by the table.*]

BORROMÄUS [*startled, pulls off his cap hastily*]. Oh — sir — [*There is a pause.*]

HAUSDORFER. Yes. She will never come out here again to see us.

BORROMÄUS. Is it possible, sir! I did n't think the lady was as ill as that. [*Shakes his head.*] And quite a young lady one might almost say.

HAUSDORFER. Young, Borromäus? Well, she *was* seven years younger than I. But then I'm nearly sixty.

BORROMÄUS. Yes, that's true, sir.

HAUSDORFER. Still, people do live longer than that.

BORROMÄUS. You see, sir, it's because I saw Mrs. Councillor so often, almost every day it seems like now, in these fifteen or twenty years —

HAUSDORFER. Yes, we were all younger twenty years ago.

BORROMÄUS. But even this last year, sir, she did n't look like an old lady. And this summer, when she grew so pale and thin — anyone would have thought — why, one evening, sir, when I went past the gate late and saw her sitting here, I really thought — beggin' your pardon, sir, I thought it must be Mrs. Councillor's younger sister.

HAUSDORFER [*after a short pause*]. Well, Borromäus, and what did our arrogant friend Franz have to say?

BORROMÄUS. Oh, no, sir, I won't bother you with such things now. [*Kisses his hand.*] I know what it means, sir, I had a wife once and — buried her. [*He is suddenly frightened at what he has said.*] That is — I meant, sir —

HAUSDORFER. I understand, Borromäus. [*There is another pause.*]

BORROMÄUS. And the young gentleman, sir?

HAUSDORFER. Who?

BORROMÄUS. Young Mr. Heinrich, sir. Oh, dear, it's too dreadful! When I think how he used to bring his mother out here all this last year, and then come for her again in the evening —

HAUSDORFER. Yes, he's greatly to be pitied.

BORROMÄUS. Is he ill himself, sir, that he does n't come out here?

HAUSDORFER. No, no, I expect him any day. He has been away, traveling. But he should return any day now. He had to rest a little — to brighten himself up — he has to work again.

BORROMÄUS. Yes, sir, when a man has his calling —

HAUSDORFER. And such a calling — a poet! [*He rises.*] A poet! Do you know what that means?

BORROMÄUS. Why, yes, sir —

HAUSDORFER. No, you don't — you don't know anything about it. We don't know anything about it at all, — we ordinary mortals, who can do nothing but putter about in our gardens —

BORROMÄUS. Oh, sir, but you once had —

HAUSDORFER. You mean, I had something else to do once upon a time? But it was n't any better than what I'm doing now. I sat at a desk in an office, in the city, from eight o'clock until two, sometimes even until three or four.

BORROMÄUS. It must be right hard to sit in one spot for six hours every day. I've often felt sorry for you, sir, in those days, when you could n't get out here until so late. And when it was Winter —

HAUSDORFER. One has to do something, Borromäus. Another man has my desk now, and if he sticks at it as long as I did he'll get his pension, too, and someone else will fall into his place. It matters so little who sits there, anyone would do. But a poet — he's a different sort of being from you and me, Borromäus. When *he* retires it may be a long, long time before anyone comes to fill his place. A poet must take good care of himself, he owes it to the world — you understand that, Borromäus?

BORROMÄUS. Why, yes, sir.

HAUSDORFER. No, you don't — you don't understand it at all. Have you noticed anything queer about Heinrich? — anything unusual? Have you never noticed the halo around his head? No? Well, there you see, you don't understand it at all. [BORROMÄUS *laughs, then looks* serious.] Don't worry about me, Borromäus. I'm not losing my mind. I don't mean a real halo, only an imaginary one. You could n't see it — nor could I — but his mother saw it.

BORROMÄUS. Yes, I know what you mean, sir. You mean the papers say so much about Mr. Heinrich, although he's so young yet — and because people talk about him — and that's it, is n't it?

[*He draws his hand around his*

head as if describing a halo. HEINRICH, *dressed in deep mourning, passes back of the fence. He bows and goes on into the house.* HAUSDORFER *looks after him and* BORROMÄUS *follows* HAUSDORFER'S *glance with his eyes.*]

HAUSDORFER. Here he comes.

[*He remains seated, silent.*]

BORROMÄUS. If you please, sir — I have n't had any chance yet to tell the young gentleman how sorry I am —

[HEINRICH *comes out onto the veranda from the house.*]

HAUSDORFER. Go and tell him now — tell him you are sorry for him.

[BORROMÄUS *goes to meet* HEINRICH *who comes down the steps into the garden and takes the old man's hand.*]

HEINRICH. Thank you, Borromäus — I understand. I thank you.

[BORROMÄUS *goes out R. softly, as* HEINRICH *comes down towards the table.* HAUSDORFER *rises now, goes a step or two to meet him and takes his hand.*]

HAUSDORFER. You've come home again?

HEINRICH. Yes, sooner than I thought. It is better at home —

HAUSDORFER [*nods*]. You went away — that same evening?

HEINRICH. Yes. I went home from the cemetery, packed my bag and left. I could n't have endured the night in the house.

HAUSDORFER. I can understand. Where did you go?

HEINRICH. I went to Salzburg first.

HAUSDORFER. Indeed?

HEINRICH. I've always felt happy there. It's a consoling town —

HAUSDORFER. Are there such towns? That would be fortunate.

HEINRICH. There are such towns — under certain conditions. I did not go to Salzburg on a mere chance. I had an experience once, seven or eight years ago — tragic, or, at least, painful — you know, Mr. Hausdorfer, one of those affairs — well, I thought I would never get over it. I went away, and I went to Salzburg. And that very afternoon, during a solitary stroll in Hellbrunn, in the charming Roccoco garden, I felt my pain lighten. Next morning I awoke strong and well — and could work again.

HAUSDORFER. Is it possible?

HEINRICH. Of course, I was scarcely twenty then, and it was Springtime — you have to take that into consideration.

HAUSDORFER. Yes — that's true.

HEINRICH. But this time I found no comfort — nothing — rather the contrary.

HAUSDORFER. Then there are times when Hellbrunn cannot heal? How long did you stay in Salzburg?

HEINRICH. I left the next day — left for Munich. I hoped for the quieting influence of the old pictures. I went to the old Pinakothek where my beloved Dürers and Holbeins hang — and there, for the first time in many, many months, I seemed to feel relief. [*There is a pause.*] You don't mind my telling you all this, do you? I feel a real need to talk it all out with you —

HAUSDORFER [*takes his hand, speaks more kindly than before*]. Please do —

HEINRICH. Thank you. [*He sits down.*] You see, Mr. Hausdorfer, I've — I've felt it deeply — that you and I — during these last years — that we seem to have — to have grown so apart.

HAUSDORFER. How do you mean?

HEINRICH. I've seen it plainly — that you — that you were n't as fond of me as you were once, — long ago, — when I was a little boy playing on the meadow there.

HAUSDORFER. Yes — that was a long time ago, Heinrich. And you must acknowledge that it was you who first — oh, well, it's only natural that you should want to go your own way. It was n't particularly interesting out here for a young man — you have your own circle of friends. But I have not complained — or have I?

HEINRICH. Oh, no. But I wanted you to know how deeply — after this unsuccessful journey, this flight — how deeply I realize that you are nearer to me than anyone else. You will understand. You know how grateful I must be to you. You

were so much to my poor mother — you made her last years of life beautiful!

HAUSDORFER [*with a gesture of protest*]. Yes — yes — but tell me more about yourself. You went to Munich and you saw the pictures? And they comforted you?

HEINRICH. Only as long as I remained in the cool, quiet halls. When I stepped out into the street again, it was all gone. And then the evenings — the long, lonely evenings! I tried to work, to think — impossible! Everything seemed dead within me. [*There is a pause. He rises.*] How long will this last, I wonder?

HAUSDORFER. It must be distressing — when you're used to regular work —

HEINRICH. Used to it? I have n't been — for a long time now. That's just the trouble. I have n't accomplished anything for two or three years. You know —

HAUSDORFER. Yes — I know.

HEINRICH. It was an absolute impossibility. To see someone you love — your mother, suffering — suffering like that — and to know that there is no hope — and that she knows it — that was the terrible part of it — this knowledge that I could see shining in her eyes when I sat by her bed evenings, reading to her. [*There is a long pause.*] I have given up the apartment.

HAUSDORFER. You have? Well, it would be too large for you alone.

HEINRICH. Apart from that — I could never write a line in those rooms again. Night after night I'd still believe that I could hear that moaning from the next room, that moaning that cut deep into my heart, that robbed me of the power or the desire to work — to live even. Oh, my God — [*Pause.*] Do you know what Dr. Heusser told me the Sunday before her death?

HAUSDORFER. What was it?

HEINRICH. He said — it might go on — for two or three years more.

HAUSDORFER [*with a start that is almost of anger*]. Two or three years more? [*Controlling himself.*] He said it might go on for two or three years more? —

HEINRICH. Yes. And it would have been much worse. She would n't have been able to leave her room — she could n't even have had her few hours out here — here in this garden where she's always been so happy.

[*He stands looking down at the empty armchair.*]

HAUSDORFER. I might have found my way into town occasionally — don't you think?

HEINRICH [*with a sense of shame*]. Dear Mr. Hausdorfer, here I am talking about myself all this time — I am young — there may be something of a future for me yet — but you — how much you have lost!

HAUSDORFER. Yes, I have lost much.

HEINRICH. I know how near my mother was to you. I have always known it — even — then — years ago.

HAUSDORFER. Even then —

HEINRICH. I was not so very little when he — who was my father — left us.

HAUSDORFER. Yes — yes.

HEINRICH. I can still remember the day mother told me that my papa had gone away. When he did not return I imagined he must be dead and I used to cry bitterly, some nights. Then one day I met him on the street with — the other woman — for whose sake he had deserted my mother. I hid in a doorway that he might not see me — I felt ashamed, child that I was. Oh, yes, I early learned to understand that my mother was free — as free as if she had been widowed.

HAUSDORFER. Then — it seems — you have forgiven us.

HEINRICH [*slightly offended*]. I beg your pardon, I must have expressed myself awkwardly. [*Warmer again.*] Why should n't we talk naturally and simply about natural, simple things, particularly in a moment like this. I long to press your hand, as a son to a father, for I know how my mother loved you.

[*It is now growing dark. The lanterns on the street are lit up one by one.*]

HAUSDORFER. Love? That would not mean so much. Love comes easily when one is young. We were *friends*, Heinrich, old people and friends. Do you know what that means? Or has the word no meaning

yet for such young ears? Ah, yes, how could you understand it? — you young people — with the world opening before you — the future at your feet — and *you*, just you with your gifts, your prospects — no wonder —

HEINRICH. Oh, you are mistaken, Mr. Hausdorfer, I do understand it. If I could bring her back to you — to us — could bring back my poor mother and see her sitting there, — if only just for one evening — what would I not give to do it?

HAUSDORFER [*bitterly*]. What *would* you give?

HEINRICH [*hesitating*]. I feel now as if I would give my entire future, all I can accomplish, all that I hope to achieve — give it all for that.

HAUSDORFER. Heinrich, don't be angry — but — you don't believe that yourself.

HEINRICH. If I could do it — if it lay in my power —

HAUSDORFER. No, Heinrich, that is not true — even if it lay in your power — I know you — I know you all — I know what you are like — you artists — all of you.

HEINRICH. All of us? I do not have to answer for anyone else.

HAUSDORFER. No, you do not have to answer for anyone else. But when I say all of you, I know what I mean. There was a man in my office — about ten years ago it was — he occupied himself with music in his leisure hours; something of his was given as a concert by the Choral Society. His name was Franz Thomas. He lost an only child, a boy of seven, handsome and intelligent. I knew him, he used to come to the office with his mother sometimes. Diphtheria killed him one night, and I went to pay my visit of condolence. He — the father — was at the piano playing — and the dead child lay in his coffin in the very same room. He sat there playing and he did n't stop when I came in — he just nodded to me and whispered, when I came up behind him: "Listen to this, Mr. Hausdorfer — this is in memory of my poor boy — the melody just came to me —" and there lay the dead child in its coffin — yes — it turned me cold —

HEINRICH [*listens with great interest and finally with a sense of satisfaction*]. Yes — I think I can understand that many people — many very worthy people, feel a sort of horror at such things.

HAUSDORFER. Horror? That is the right word.

HEINRICH. But tell me, Mr. Hausdorfer, are n't they to be envied — the people who can escape like that — escape from their sorrows into their work, into their art? — who may even possess the magic power to shape their grief into something beautiful, instead of pouring it out in useless tears?

HAUSDORFER. Into something beautiful? Does that bring back the dead?

HEINRICH. As little as do the tears. I don't say that our joy in our work can outweigh the grief for a beloved one lost. But is n't it all that is left to us? This work of ours? Will you not tend your garden as carefully as before? And I — I long for the day when I shall be able to work again, to accomplish something worth while. We must all bow to the inevitable.

HAUSDORFER. To the *inevitable* — yes, that may be true.

HEINRICH. This was inevitable.

HAUSDORFER. No — no —

HEINRICH [*slightly surprised*]. But it was. Why torture yourself with such thoughts? Did n't you speak to the doctor yourself not more than six weeks ago — he told you the truth then — it had to come.

HAUSDORFER. But not so soon — not yet.

HEINRICH. How can you say that, Mr. Hausdorfer? You don't mean — that there was any neglect —

HAUSDORFER. Oh, no — oh, no, forgive me. Everything was done that could possibly be done.

HEINRICH. Well, then?

HAUSDORFER. Did n't you tell me yourself, just now, that she might have had two or three years more to live?

HEINRICH. Why, yes, that's true. But the doctor warned us that death might come suddenly any day — you know that as well as I do.

HAUSDORFER. Suddenly? Yes, it came suddenly enough. [*Hesitating, then with*

decision.] But whether it came — naturally — that's another question.

HEINRICH [*startled*]. What? Why? — I don't understand how you could suggest such a thing — when there was n't the slightest — the doctor would surely have noticed —

HAUSDORFER. Why should he? An overdose of morphine — death before morning — the family are prepared —

HEINRICH. You say that — with such strange conviction — did my mother ever — speak about — ?

HAUSDORFER. I am not mistaken — let that suffice.

HEINRICH. Since you have already said so much, Mr. Hausdorfer, you will understand that I —

HAUSDORFER. I know what I am talking about — don't ask any more.

HEINRICH. You mean — the letter on her desk —

HAUSDORFER [*nods*]. Yes.

[*There is a pause.*]

HEINRICH [*alarmed, doubtful*]. The letter? Hm — Yet why should I be surprised? How many times in those terrible nights have I asked myself — I will confess it now, even at the risk of giving you the horrors — I have asked myself why we poor mortals should suffer so much misery — such agony, when it is in our power to end it all any moment.

HAUSDORFER. Heinrich!

HEINRICH. If my mother has done — what you say she has — then she has done right.

HAUSDORFER. Heinrich!

HEINRICH. That is my honest opinion.

HAUSDORFER. But you don't know, Heinrich — you don't know the truth. She would have lived on — even in torture — as long as God gave her life — she would have lived on for my sake and for her own — for our few hours in the garden here — so full of memories of our youth, and our happiness. She died for your sake, Heinrich — now you know, — she died for you.

HEINRICH [*in growing excitement*]. For me — ? For me? I don't understand you at all — for me? What do you mean?

HAUSDORFER. Can't you really understand? Can't you imagine? Did n't you speak of it yourself, just now?

HEINRICH. Speak of what?

HAUSDORFER. Have n't you just told me what has been going on in you this last year? And do you think your mother would n't notice it?

HEINRICH. Notice what?

HAUSDORFER. That her illness hampered you in your work? — that you could n't write — that you were afraid your talent was dead — that you — *you* — were the martyr, that you were a ruined man — she saw all that — and *because* she saw it —

HEINRICH. Because of that? Oh, no, no — it is n't possible.

HAUSDORFER. She was your mother — it was quite possible.

HEINRICH. Oh, no, no. Mr. Hausdorfer, your grief leads you into surmises that are quite unjustified. Of course I realize that my state of mind cannot have been a secret to my mother — although I did my best to hide it from her. But that this should have been the reason for — oh, no — no.

HAUSDORFER [*interrupting vehemently*]. Why won't you believe me? Do you think I am lying to you? Why should I? [*He takes a letter from his pocket.*] Here, read this — read this — this letter was written with full consciousness — it's the letter that was found on her desk. She wrote it that last evening — and half an hour later — read it — read it — it's all there — because she saw you suffer — *she* saw *you* — suffer — she — left us — before her time had come — that's why — she died.

HEINRICH [*reads the letter quickly*]. Mother! mother! [*He sinks down as if crushed*]. For me — for my sake — why then — then I am her — oh, my God — Mother!

[*He kneels before the armchair burying his head in its seat.* HAUSDORFER *looks down at him and nods slowly. There is a long pause. Finally* HEINRICH *rises and speaks quietly.*]

HEINRICH. I will go now. I can imagine how painful it is for you to see me here. This letter — [*He still holds it in his hand.*] — it is written in full consciousness and it

tells the truth. I cannot doubt it. [*After a moment's hesitation.*] But may I — may I call your attention to one sentence?

HAUSDORFER. Which?

HEINRICH. This one, in which my mother implores you never to betray the contents of this letter to me. [*Reading.*] "I implore you — " She implores you to leave me in the belief that she died a natural death. This letter was intended for you alone and certainly not for me.

HAUSDORFER. But I intend that you shall know of it. I take the responsibility. You will survive it.

HEINRICH. Your action has destroyed the very reason for her voluntary death, for her great sacrifice. *She* did not will that I should feel myself her murderer, that I should go through life as one accursed. And some day you may come to realize that you have done a great wrong, not only to me but to her — a wrong as great as mine has been.

HAUSDORFER. I will take it upon myself, Heinrich — I can tell you, — *you*. You will not feel guilty long — you will live on — you will work — you will shape it into something beautiful.

HEINRICH. That is my right — it is even my duty now. There is nothing for me now but to kill myself, or to give the proof that my mother — has not died in vain.

HAUSDORFER. Heinrich! Your mother was alive less than a month ago and you can talk like this? She killed herself for your sake — and you can shake it off? A few days more and you'll be thinking, perhaps, that what she did was only her duty. Am I not right? You are all alike, you artists — great and small — all alike — proud, arrogant! What is all your writing — even if you were the greatest genius — what is all your writing compared to one such living hour? — one of those hours when your mother sat here in this armchair and talked to us — or just sat silent — but she was here — and she was alive — she was alive — alive!

HEINRICH. *Living hours?* They live no longer than the life of him who remembers them. And it is no mean vocation to give such hours an enduring existence beyond the grave. Good-bye, Mr. Hausdorfer. Today your grief gives you the right to misunderstand me. In the Spring, when your garden blooms anew, we will meet again. For you, too, — will go on living.

[*He goes out through the veranda. As he opens the door of the house a broad stream of light from the lamp shines out into the now darkened garden.*]

CURTAIN

THE CONCERT

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

By HERMANN BAHR

Translated by BAYARD QUINCY MORGAN

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PERSONS

Gustav Hein, *Pianist*
Marie, his *Wife*
Frank Jura
Delphina, his *Wife*
Eva Gerndl
Pollinger
Mrs. Pollinger
Miss Vayner, *Maid*
Miss Selma Meier
Miss Garden
Mrs. Claire Floderer
Mrs. Fanny Mell
Mrs. Kann

THE CONCERT

FIRST ACT

HEIN'S *drawing-room. In the left wall, door to* MARIE'S *room; centre, door to the music-room; in the right wall, door to the anteroom. Pictures of* GUSTAV HEIN, *a bust of* GUSTAV HEIN. *To the left a table and chairs. By the right-hand door, a fireplace, farther front a sofa backed against the wall, before it a small round table and chairs. Flowers in tall narrow vases everywhere. Everything is "bright," comfortable, and costly, of an agreeable, easy elegance.*

On the table to the left: Bouquets of tulips, narcissus, and lilacs, just laid down; a pile of unopened pale-blue, yellow, and pink notes, with monograms on them; also a travelling bag of yellow leather, half packed. On the table to the right a pile of unopened notes.

The door to the music-room is open; a great black Steinway is visible, and on the wall laurel wreaths with large bows of ribbon. The door to the right is also open.

HEIN [43; *tall, strikingly slender — which he tries to accentuate by his dress — and very youthful in his rapid movements; coal-black hair falling in long smooth locks on his shoulders; his restless countenance smooth shaven, very intelligent, with a slant toward mockery, which disturbs the banal amiableness of his expression; it would be the head of a crafty cosmopolite or diplomat but for the long hair, which gives him a sort of professionally artistic air; he is effeminately coquettish, especially when in conversation he suddenly opens wide his heavy, somewhat sleepy eyes, to stare abstractedly into space; he speaks with an affected cordiality, and his caressing voice has a pleading, cajoling quality, yet he easily forgets himself, and when he is impatient, it becomes harsh and shrill; he is wearing an automobile coat; he is to the right in the music-room, invisible as yet, and can hardly fend off the thronging ladies*]. Believe me, ladies, I am inconsolable! An oversight of my secretary, quite evidently, which I cannot as yet even explain to myself, for you can surely imagine, most honored ladies, that I — [*still invisible, he suddenly breaks off, on failing to find something, and calls impatiently toward the anteroom*] Miss Vayner! [*And immediately resuming his gentle tone.*] As I was saying, I am inconsolable, I could not imagine that my secretary — and I cannot understand it, either, he had instructions yesterday to notify you ladies at once, and I have no idea what — [*again calling toward the anteroom in his impatient tone, still more vehemently, as he becomes visible for a moment, shooting to the door of the music-room, pyjamas over his arm, a small bag in his hand, accompanied by the ladies*] Miss Vayner! [*Vanishes again at once to the right in the music-room and continues with softly plaintive voice.*] You see me inconsolable, ladies. In two days, to be sure, I shall be back again, but you can imagine how anxious I shall be about you during those two days. [*Again in the other tone, shouting with rage.*] Miss Vayner!

MRS. FANNY MELL [*short, excited, scatterbrained; runs out into the drawing-room, calling towards the anteroom*]. Miss Vayner!

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*blonde, fat, tragic; steps into the doorway, leans against the jamb, and sighs with tears in her eyes*]. Oh dear, oh dear!

MISS SELMA MEIER [*enthusiastic, breathless; storms after* MRS. MELL, *calling towards the anteroom*]. Miss Vayner!

MRS. FANNY MELL [*in front of the right-hand door, calling into the anteroom*]. Miss Vayner! [*About to enter the anteroom, she collides with* EVA GERNDL; *starts back before the huge bouquet which the latter holds out.*] Oh!

EVA [*nineteen; very slender, phantastic;*

dressed to suggest a snake, with Klimt[1] *eyes, Klimt hair, everything Klimt; tries in every way to be nervously iridescent; is perpetually excited and suspicious; occasionally she forgets herself and her assumed expression drops, revealing an innocent, appealing Viennese face with large, wondering, child-like eyes; first appears a monstrous bouquet of yellow tulips, which she is carrying, then follows herself; she starts at* MRS. FANNY MELL *and asks with immediate deep mistrust*]. What? What is it? What has happened?

MRS. FANNY MELL [*with a backward glance into the music-room, and an expression of the utmost horror*]. He's going away!

MISS SELMA MEIER [*joins them*]. He's going away!

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*tragically, with deep voice*]. The Master's going away!

[*Comes forward slowly.*]

EVA [*choking over the words*]. Go—ing a—way?

MRS. FANNY MELL [*quickly*]. No lesson —

MISS SELMA MEIER [*chiming in*]. None tomorrow and —

MRS. FANNY MELL [*interrupting*]. He's going to give a concert —

MISS SELMA MEIER [*interposing*]. The secretary was to have notified us —

MRS. FANNY MELL. He did n't notify me —

MISS SELMA MEIER. Nor me —

MRS. FANNY MELL [*to* EVA]. Did he write to you?

EVA [*still quite speechless*]. Who, me?

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*joining them; tragically*]. The Master's going away!

EVA [*breathless*]. Not a word, not a word! But there — there —

[*Struggles for breath.*]

HEIN [*in the music-room, invisible; calls toward the anteroom*]. Miss Vayner!

EVA. There's a mystery in this.

[*Drops her bouquet with a brief shriek, puts her hand to her heart, and sinks on the sofa.*]

MRS. KANN [*short, stocky, asthmatic; a gigantic hat and many rings; shoots out of the music-room*]. Miss Vayner!

[1] Contemporaneous painter.

MRS. FANNY MELL [*running into the anteroom*]. Miss Vayner! [*Exit right.*]

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*makes for the anteroom, but remains by the right-hand door; sighing*]. Oh dear, oh dear!

MRS. KANN [*waddles toward* EVA]. No lesson, the Master's going away!

EVA [*her eyes closed, with feeble voice*]. Water, water!

[*Lies picturesquely on the sofa.*]

MRS. KANN [*inquiring indifferently, without stirring*]. What's the matter with you?

HEIN [*from the music-room laden with pyjamas, satchel, and a foot-warmer, which* MISS GARDEN *is insisting on taking from him; he protests, affectedly, like a bashful child*]. No, no! What are you thinking of? That will never do, my child.

[*Goes toward the left-hand table.*]

MISS GARDEN [*American; extravagantly and exotically got up; tugs at the foot-warmer*]. Oh, do give it to me, Master! Give it to me! Oh, it makes me happy!

MRS. KANN [*waddles up to* HEIN]. No, to me, Master, to me!

[EVA *opens her eyes, blinking, and as no one takes any notice of her, she gets up and reaches for her bouquet.*]

HEIN [*protesting as before*]. No, children, no! It really won't do at all. That's not for your delicate hands.

[MRS. KANN *seizes his pyjamas and holds them aloft.* MISS GARDEN *snatches away the foot-warmer and presses it to her breast.*]

HEIN [*centre, between them, satchel in hand; lamenting with pained reproach*]. Fie, children! Shame, children! Are you mad?

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*stepping up behind him from the right-hand door; slowly, with deep tenderness, pleading*]. Master!

HEIN [*unconcernedly, quickly*]. Yes, my child?

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*with heavy fervor*]. Confide the satchel to me, Master!

HEIN [*quickly lays his hand protectingly on the satchel; again in the same pouting and protesting tone as before*]. No, children, now stop it. You know I don't like to have

you carry it so far. It makes me all confused.

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*with profound sadness*]. And am I the only one to get no favors?

HEIN [*looks coquettishly at her, smiles, and hands her the satchel*]. Who could resist such eyes? [*Claps his hands; in a different tone, impatiently.*] But now hurry up and finish this packing some time. It's high time. If you don't I'll actually miss my — concert. [*Merrily.*] Hurry, children, hurry.

[MISS GARDEN, MRS. KANN, *and* MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER *set to packing the yellow bag at the left-hand table.*]

EVA [*steps up to* HEIN, *who notices her for the first time, and hands him the yellow tulips*]. Revered Master!

HEIN [*with affected surprise, taking the tulips*]. Oh, the lovely, lovely flowers! Oh, thank you! And do you know, child, that those are my favorite flowers?

EVA [*feigning joyful astonishment*]. Not really?

HEIN [*caressing them, coquettishly*]. Yes, indeed.

EVA. Truly, Master?

HEIN. Little Eva guesses my most secret thoughts.

EVA. I only wish the Master would guess mine!

HEIN [*coquettishly*]. Well?

EVA [*softly*]. I'd like to go along.

[*Looks impudently at him.*]

HEIN [*startled, confused; suddenly in a hard, impatient tone*]. What, how, where to?

EVA [*boldly*]. To the concert.

HEIN [*quickly*]. Which — [*vexed*] Oh! [*sharply*] What are you thinking of?

EVA [*impudently*]. To the concert you are going to give. I don't know where. But why not?

HEIN [*vehemently*]. No. Out of the question, my child. [*More mildly.*] Yes, and perhaps have it said that I drag the whole crowd of my pupils along with me? That would be a treat for the gentlemen of the press. And besides, child, it's not a public concert at all, but in a château, belonging to Countess — but the name does n't matter, I don't want people to know it, it would look as if I wanted to make a boast of it, and you know, my child, I hate nothing worse than anything that smacks of advertising. [*Suddenly assuming a very agreeable, flattering tone.*] So be a dear and keep my secret. Will you?

EVA [*with hypocritical candor*]. Yes, Master.

HEIN. Little Eva will surely not betray me? Oh, no, I know her too well. And if she is good and knows how to hold her tongue, then —

EVA. Then?

HEIN [*with a coquettish glance*]. Hm! Who knows?

EVA. Then can I go along another time, to the — concert?

HEIN [*his face quite near hers, coquettishly*]. Who knows?

EVA [*slowly*]. Even to such a very secret concert?

HEIN [*suddenly irritated, dryly*]. My dear child, rather use these few days to get in some good practice for once. Your touch is most deficient. That's what comes of having all kinds of folly in your head. I can take a joke. But Art, my child, Art demands complete devotion. [*He leaves her standing and turns from her toward the left-hand table; suddenly in a different, whining tone.*] But not the foot-warmer! What *are* you doing there, the foot-warmer does n't go into the bag!

[MRS. KANN, MISS GARDEN, *and* MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER *pull everything out of the bag again.* EVA *follows* HEIN *with her eyes for a moment, then stamps her foot angrily and goes to the fireplace, where she remains, defiant.*]

MISS VAYNER [27; *anxious, harassed; bringing an automobile cap, breathless, comes through the anteroom door*]. Here is the —

[MRS. FANNY MELL *and* MISS SELMA MEIER *behind* MISS VAYNER, *go straight to the left-hand table.*]

HEIN [*upon hearing* MISS VAYNER'S

voice, without turning around, busy over his bag; complaining impatiently]. At last, Miss Vayner! Where have you been keeping yourself, Miss Vayner? Don't you know I'm going away, Miss Vayner? And you leave me all alone. I really must say, I have other things on my mind.

MISS VAYNER [*holds out the cap to him, breathless*]. I was looking for your cap, sir.

HEIN [*with impatient irritation*]. Oh, yes, my cap.

MISS VAYNER. It was hanging in the apple-tree in the garden.

HEIN [*vexed*]. Well! You might have thought of that. [*Looks at her reproachfully; in the tone of one deeply wounded.*] Miss Vayner, Miss Vayner!

MISS VAYNER [*conscious of guilt; softly, beseechingly, crushed*]. Pardon me, sir.

HEIN [*impatient, whining; pointing to the bag, which he cannot close*]. But now come here, won't you, and help us. [*As she dashes toward the table.*] But first go and see if John is ready. It's high time, Miss Vayner. Tell him to come for the bag at once. [*As she dashes toward the anteroom door.*] And Miss Vayner, Miss Vayner! Have you told my wife —?

MISS VAYNER [*at the door*]. Right away, sir. [*Exit right.*]

HEIN [*shouts madly after her*]. No, Miss Vayner. Listen, can't you!

MRS. FANNY MELL [*dashing to the anteroom door*]. Miss Vayner!

MISS GARDEN [*working over the bag*]. We must stuff the things in. Then it will go all right.

MISS SELMA MEIER [*dashing to the anteroom door*]. Miss Vayner!

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*with deep voice*]. Oh dear, oh dear!

MISS VAYNER [*outside, to the right*]. Yes? [*Appears at the door breathless.*]

HEIN [*despairing, whining*]. First of all call my wife, won't you? I asked you to call my wife, Miss Vayner!

MISS VAYNER [*rushes to the left-hand door*]. Yes, sir.

HEIN. And give me my cap, why don't you? Why *don't* you give me my cap?

MISS VAYNER [*has had the cap in her hand all this time; at the door, wholly disconcerted*]. The cap? Your cap, sir?

MRS. FANNY MELL. The cap, Miss Vayner!

MISS SELMA MEIER. The cap!

HEIN [*roaring*]. You've got it in your hand!

MISS VAYNER [*startled*]. Yes, sir. [*Runs to him with it.*]

HEIN [*taking the cap and putting it on*]. But first of all my wife, Miss Vayner. And you have n't called John for me yet. And then you must come and shut my bag some time!

MISS VAYNER [*at the door*]. Right away, sir. [*Exit left.*]

HEIN [*lamenting*]. If I don't do everything myself! You see, ladies. Ah, yes, children, it's hard, this being famous. [*Walks toward the right, perceives* EVA; *angrily.*] And you might help a little, too, instead of molding yourself into a picturesque statuette there by the fireplace. With your laziness, my child, you will never get anywhere. How many more times have I got to tell you that?

EVA [*angry, quite softly*]. You have offended me too deeply.

HEIN [*forced to laugh by her angry face*]. How so? When?

EVA. Do you think I don't know?

HEIN [*uneasy*]. What?

EVA. Everything.

HEIN [*impatient*]. What do you mean?

EVA [*with a mocking obeisance*]. Good luck to your — concert, revered Master.

HEIN [*uneasy, stern*]. Child, I insist that you —

MISS GARDEN [*has at last succeeded in getting the bag shut; triumphant*]. It's shut!

MRS. KANN [*triumphant*]. Shut!

MISS SELMA MEIER [*rushes up to* HEIN]. It's shut! Master, the bag is shut!

[EVA *returns to the fireplace, her back to the others.*]

MRS. FANNY MELL. But the keys?

MISS GARDEN *and* MRS KANN [*carrying the bag to the anteroom door*]. Yes, the keys?

HEIN [*searching his pockets*]. The keys?

MARIE [32; *blonde, petite, very dainty; her face is much too intelligent to be beautiful; there is over her whole being a great calm,*

which is however deceptive; she is very unostentatiously dressed, with almost coquettish simplicity; comes through the left-hand door, which MISS VAYNER *closes after her; seeing the ladies, she nods briefly, remaining at the left by the table*]. What is it, Gus?

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*to* MISS VAYNER]. The keys, Miss Vayner! Oh dear!

HEIN [*toward* MARIE, *still searching all his pockets for the keys; hastily*]. Good morning, Marie. I just wanted to tell you that I — [*interrupts himself, stops short, and cries furiously*] I have n't the keys! Miss Vayner, Miss Vayner!

MISS VAYNER. The keys must be in the music-room.

[*Runs through centre door into the music-room.*]

MISS GARDEN *and* MRS. KANN [*drop the bag by the anteroom door and rush into the music-room*]. In the music-room!

[MRS. FANNY MELL *and* MISS SELMA MEIER *rush into the music-room.* MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER *follows them into the music-room with slow tragic steps.*]

HEIN [*calling into the music-room; angry, complaining*]. And Miss Vayner, is n't John ready yet? [*With a half turn to* EVA; *impatiently, curtly.*] Ah, Mrs. Eva, perhaps you'll do me the favor to run and see about John. Will you?

[EVA *vexed; controls her vexation and nods shortly; exit right.*]

HEIN [*joins* MARIE *at the left; in conversing with her his voice takes on an occasional timidity or embarrassment which is otherwise foreign to him*]. I only want to say a hurried goodbye to you, Marie: just think, I've got to go away for a couple of days, it came about quite suddenly, just now, early this morning in fact, but [*with a short embarrassed laugh*] we need n't take solemn farewell, I'll be back in two or three days, it will be good for me to get out of the harness for a while, it's a concert, you know, quite insignificant, by the way, the chief point is to give me a little fresh air, and on the side I intend, now that the opportunity offers, you understand of course —

MARIE [*with unconcealed sarcasm*]. I thought right away it was going to be a concert.

HEIN [*brought up short by her tone; offended*]. Marie! [*Looking at her, he has to laugh; merrily.*] But you are right, that would be too stupid, I'm surely not going to lie to *you*. You won't give me away, only I have to say that before [*with a gesture toward the music-room*] before my geese, for believe me, Marie, they are terrible, it's no go any more, I must get away for a couple of days, I want to go up to the cabin, to lie in the woods for a few days and listen to the birds, I can't stand it any more and spring is here now, that's when it always comes over me, and I've honestly earned two or three days' vacation, don't you think?

MARIE. You have honestly earned them. And it is very nice of you not to lie to me.

HEIN [*looks at her doubtfully to see if she is serious*]. Yes, don't you think so? [*Continuing hastily.*] And of course you won't give me away to the geese, they don't need to know, it would only start more gossip again. [*In a lively tone.*] You know how people are, they'd say I was tired or I was sick, or I don't know what all, especially at my age, they're always counting up the years on me as it is. Nowadays they treat every musician over twenty as a patriarch. So you understand why I prefer to say that I'm going away for a concert, it's really wiser. [*Laughing.*] And of course you won't give me away.

MARIE. No, I won't give you away. You know that I can hold my tongue, don't you?

HEIN. If you could only get rid of that ironical tone. You often say the nicest things in a tone that makes them positively uncanny.

MARIE [*simulates astonishment*]. I?

HEIN [*uncertainly*]. Or do I imagine it? [*Quickly glossing it over.*] It's possible, of course, my nerves are all unstrung again, good heavens, just remember what a winter it's been, first the big concert tour, then running here from one function to another, and all day long these geese. Do calm then down, won't you, or some one of

them will throw herself in front of my car one of these days.

MARIE. My dear Gus, how can I? You know they all hate me.

HEIN. Why?

MARIE. I suppose they think I take you from them. There is danger connected with being your wife.

HEIN [*laughing*]. But you're quite brave about it.

MARIE [*resigned to her fate*]. One learns to be.

[JOHN, HEIN'S *chauffeur, comes through the anteroom door and takes the bag.* EVA *enters with* JOHN; *goes to fireplace.*]

HEIN [*perceiving* JOHN]. Well, at last, John. Are we ready?

JOHN. We are, sir. [*Exit right with bag.*]

HEIN. And high time, too. [*Giving* MARIE *his hand.*] So take good care of yourself, and in two days I'll be with you again. [*Kisses her hand.*]

[MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER *comes out of the music-room.*]

MARIE. Only don't overexert yourself.

HEIN [*confused by her tone*]. Oh, you! You're always making fun of me.

MARIE [*feigning concern*]. Well, a concert like that —

HEIN [*embraces her impetuously*]. Goodbye, goodbye. [*Kisses her.*] Goodbye.

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*seeing him kiss her; tragically*]. Oh dear!

MISS VAYNER, MISS GARDEN, MRS. FANNY MELL, MRS. KANN, *and* MISS SELMA MEIER [*in the music-room, all shouting at once*]. There they are! The keys are found! Found, found! Give them to me! Let me have them!

[*They rush forward out of the music-room, crowding and shouting,* MISS VAYNER *at the head with the keys,* MISS GARDEN *last.*]

HEIN [*taking to flight before them, putting on his motoring goggles*]. But now quickly, God help me. [*Waves his hand once more to his wife and runs to the anteroom door.*] Goodbye, goodbye! And the foot-warmer, Miss Vayner! Don't forget the foot-warmer! In three days, children, I'll be back again. Have you the satchel, Miss Vayner? And hold your thumbs, children, for my concert! [*Exit right; still speaking.*] And practice good and hard, children, good and hard! Think of me and practice. Miss Vayner, I've forgotten the flowers! The flowers, the flowers must go too. And the letters, my letters. Just practice hard. Always practice good and hard, children,

[*His voice dies away, the chugging of the car is heard.* MARIE, *smiling, exits slowly to left.*]

MISS VAYNER, MRS. FANNY MELL, MRS. KANN, *and* MISS SELMA MEIER [*crowd out behind* HEIN, *to the right; their voices are heard outside*]. The flowers, for goodness sake, the flowers!

[MISS GARDEN, *just at the anteroom door, turns once more to get the flowers and letters.* MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER *anticipates her, rushes to the table, gathers up flowers and letters, and solemnly carries them out, measuring* MISS GARDEN *with threatening glance.*]

MISS GARDEN [*full of hate and wrath*]. Oh, that horrible person! I hate her!

MISS SELMA MEIER [*comes back through the anteroom door; breathless*]. The flowers! He has forgotten the flowers!

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*pressing them firmly to her bosom; solemnly, with heavy voice*]. I have his flowers. [*Exit right.*]

[MISS SELMA MEIER *stands disappointed and unhappy at the anteroom door, and lets* MRS. FLODERER *pass.*]

EVA [*steps quickly to* MISS GARDEN; *sharply*]. I must speak with you. You've the most sense of any of them.

MISS GARDEN [*astonished*]. Oh, yes.

EVA [*calling*]. Selma!

MISS SELMA MEIER [*starting*]. Yes?

[*Joins her.*]

EVA [*stepping between, taking each by the hand; sharply*]. You believe in this concert? [*Scornfully.*] You believe in this concert? [*Full of contempt.*] You believe in this concert?

[*Drops their hands and leaves*

them, to sit down in the middle of the sofa.]

MISS SELMA MEIER [*after a pause, pondering, curious, advancing to the sofa*]. You think — ?

MISS GARDEN [*after a pause, slowly moving up beside* MISS MEIER]. I don't believe, but I don't know.

EVA. But I know. [*Beckons them both quite close to her; then whispering mysteriously, very quickly and sharply.*] Only yesterday he did n't know anything about this concert, did he? We were here, I guess! [*Both nod.*] It's only this morning that this concert heaves in sight. This morning. [*Both nod.*] Of course he says his secretary was supposed to write us. *Says* so. But did the secretary write you? [MISS MEIER *shakes her head.*] No! Did he write you? [MISS GARDEN *the same.*] No! Did he write me? No! Therefore, therefore, therefore!

MISS SELMA MEIER [*eagerly*]. Therefore?

MISS GARDEN [*drawling*]. Therefore?

EVA. Or did you ever hear of a concert existing one day that did n't the day before?

MISS SELMA MEIER [*quickly, convinced*]. No!

EVA. Think it over.

MISS GARDEN [*slowly, drawling*]. No.

EVA [*in triumph*]. But now notice. Nobody knew there would n't be a lesson today. Everybody came. I did n't know, you did n't know, Miss Garden did n't know, nor Mrs. Fanny Mell, nor Mrs. Kann, and not even Mrs. Claire Floderer, his tragic muse [*mocking her*]. Oh dear! no, and I asked Miss Vayner, and she did n't know it, no, not one. Not one knew it, everybody came. Only one knew it, for she did n't come. Who did n't come? Mrs. Delphina Jura did n't come. So she must have known.

MISS SELMA MEIER [*excited*]. That's true.

MISS GARDEN [*slowly, drawling*]. That's true.

EVA [*solemnly confirming*]. That is true. And therefore —

MISS SELMA MEIER [*sticking her head out*]. Therefore?

MISS GARDEN [*doing likewise, slowly*]. Therefore — [*as she begins to comprehend, joyfully agreeing*] I see, I see, I see!

EVA [*continuing her conclusion*] . . . it is clear, that this concert, which Gustav Hein is giving today, is named Mrs. Delphina Jura.

MISS GARDEN [*outraged*]. Oh, that shameful person!

EVA [*assenting from a full heart*]. Yes, indeed, Miss Garden. You have found the true word for it. I was once in the Sacred Heart with that lady.

MISS SELMA MEIER [*horrified*]. Do you really think that Gustav Hein, that that Jura person — ?

EVA. Even Gustav Hein is only a man. It is well known how weak they are. She has seduced him.

MISS GARDEN. She has a nose like a pug dog.

EVA. What does Gustav Hein know about it? He lives on a higher plane.

MISS SELMA MEIER [*mocking, bitter, contemptuous*]. With her! With her! With Mrs. Delphina Jura!

EVA [*triumphing*]. Not yet! For I am still here. Not yet!

MISS SELMA MEIER [*curiously*]. But if you think that they have —

EVA. They're already in the auto. In three hours they can be in the canyon. From there it's hardly an hour's walk to the cabin. It's known all over town that Gustav Hein always goes to that cabin, his little hunting lodge up there in the woods, every time, every time — oh, *you* know. Every time he begins a new concert.

MISS SELMA MEIER [*still unable to overcome her astonishment*]. No, no. No doubt of it. You are right.

MISS GARDEN [*outraged*]. Horrible.

EVA [*with a shrug*]. An artist needs that sort of thing.

MISS SELMA MEIER [*with quick assent*]. Yes, one must n't be narrow, Miss Garden.

EVA [*suddenly growing angry, with raised voice*]. Yes. But — but he does n't need Mrs. Jura.

MISS SELMA MEIER. No!

EVA [*with growing anger*]. But of course Mrs. Jura always thinks she's got to be

first everywhere. Always pushing herself forward, always wants a taste of everything. Oh, I knew it, from the very first day she suddenly hove in sight here. Mrs. Jura had suddenly discovered her musical heart. [*Sarcastically.*] Musical, poor Delphina, good Lord! Just as she had to marry Jura, when skeeing came into vogue, for at that time *he* was on top. There's not a single genuine fibre in that woman. [*In a different tone, full of compassion; very swiftly.*] I'm awfully sorry for the poor man. Such a sensible, simple, nice man. These men are a mystery. And now, hardly a year after their marriage, not even a year after their marriage — that's no way to do. I'm no prude, I'm a modern woman too; who can resist the impulse of the heart? But a decent woman observes a certain interval, after all. Not a year after their marriage. The poor man. But I could have foretold it. I know dear Delphina. And she — [*again very angry; with a scornful resolution, as she jumps up*] she shall learn to know me too. [*Crosses the room.*] Look out for me. Oho, Oho! You shall learn to know me, never fear, my proud little Dell. Oho, look out for me. [*Rubs her hands maliciously.*]

MISS SELMA MEIER [*runs after her; eager*]. What are you going to do?

[EVA *merely laughs, without answering.*]

MISS GARDEN [*urgently*]. Oh, speak! Tell us!

[EVA *merely laughs scornfully, rushing about the room.*]

MISS SELMA MEIER [*eagerly*]. Speak, do! You have some plan.

MISS GARDEN. I am terribly curious.

MISS SELMA MEIER. You're going to do something.

MISS GARDEN. Oh, speak! Oh, speak!

MISS SELMA MEIER. What are you going to do?

EVA [*stops laughing and running; quickly, sharply*]. I will — [*steps in between them, taking each by the hand, and looks grandiloquently at them; after a pause, slowly, simply, calmly*] I will save the Master.

MISS SELMA MEIER [*intoxicated*]. Glorious!

MISS GARDEN [*admiring*]. Oh, you are a daring woman.

EVA [*simply*]. I shall save the Master.

MISS SELMA MEIER [*eagerly*]. How?

MISS GARDEN. I'd like to help save him.

MISS SELMA MEIER. Do tell us your plan.

MISS GARDEN. Oh, tell us, tell us!

EVA [*with a superior smile, very decisively, very quietly*]. I shall save the Master. [*Drops their hands and turns to the anteroom door.*] Goodbye.

MISS SELMA MEIER [*excited*]. What is it? Where are you going?

EVA. I have no more time.

MISS GARDEN. Oh, take me with you!

EVA. Tomorrow you shall hear all about it.

MISS VAYNER [*outside at the right; invisible; shouting*]. No, I shan't let you go. You must come with me to the mistress.

EVA [*attentive to the clamor; curious*]. What's this? [*Stands listening.*]

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*outside, invisible; with agitated voice*]. But listen, when I tell you —

MISS SELMA MEIER [*whispering excitedly*]. Here's excitement. [*Stands listening.*]

MISS VAYNER [*outside*]. No, you must come with me.

MISS GARDEN [*enthusiastic*]. Oh, today's terribly full of excitement.

[*Stands listening.*]

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*outside*]. When I tell you —

EVA [*listening, mockingly*]. The tragic muse!

MISS VAYNER [*appearing in the anteroom door, a small framed picture in her hand, dragging* MRS. FLODERER *after her; very much excited*]. It is my duty to report this to my mistress.

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*appearing behind* MISS VAYNER]. But first listen to me, while I explain to you —

MISS VAYNER. The mistress shall decide. [*About to drag* MRS. FLODERER *off to the left, now perceives* EVA *and the others, and stops in wonderment*]. Oh! The ladies are still here?

EVA, MISS SELMA MEIER, *and* MISS GARDEN [*crowding about* MISS VAYNER *and*

MRS. FLODERER, *inquiring curiously and all at once*]. What has happened? Speak, Miss Vayner. Tell us about it, Mrs. Floderer. What's the matter with you? What's the excitement?

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*in tragic complaint*]. This person has had the impudence —

MISS VAYNER [*interrupting, brandishing the picture*]. Pardon me, ladies, this picture —

EVA [*craning her neck*]. What sort of a picture?

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*with deep voice, in a constant drawl*]. It's not true, only —

MISS SELMA MEIER [*craning her neck*]. Let's see.

MISS GARDEN [*craning her neck*]. A picture? Oh!

MISS VAYNER [*shouting*]. Listen, won't you? Mrs. Floderer —

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER. This person lies!

MISS SELMA MEIER. Listen, now, listen! Tell us about it.

EVA [*to* MRS. FLODERER, *vehemently*]. Do let her tell us about it.

MISS VAYNER [*almost crying with agitation*]. I just caught Mrs. Floderer taking this picture from the wall in the anteroom and carrying it off.

EVA [*outraged*]. Oh!

MISS SELMA MEIER [*horrified*]. Oh!

MISS GARDEN [*coolly*]. Oh!

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*softly lamenting, almost in tears*]. But I was only going to —

MISS VAYNER [*lowering the picture and regarding it; in a different tone, enraptured*]. A picture of the Master at seventeen.

EVA [*crowding close to* MISS VAYNER, *to look at the picture over her shoulder; forgetting everything, enraptured*]. Those dear eyes!

MISS SELMA MEIER [*crowding close to* MISS VAYNER *on the other side; enraptured*]. That soft mouth!

MISS GARDEN [*behind* MISS VAYNER, *looking over her shoulder at the picture; enraptured*]. Oh, his mouth has grown much larger since then.

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*crowding close to* MISS VAYNER, *regarding the picture; enraptured*]. His mouth is still soft.

MISS GARDEN. Oh, now his mouth is splendidly hard.

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER. Soft!

EVA [*deciding*]. His mouth is hard and soft at the same time.

MISS SELMA MEIER [*in enthusiastic assent*]. Yes!

MISS VAYNER [*suddenly bethinking herself, raises the picture, accusingly*]. And it is this precious picture that Mrs. Floderer wanted to steal.

MISS GARDEN, EVA, MISS SELMA MEIER [*recoiling, speaking at once*]. Oh! Horrible! No!

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*in tragic asservation*]. No! Not to steal. No. I only want to have it photographed for myself.

EVA [*quickly*]. And for me, too, Mrs. Floderer.

MISS SELMA MEIER [*quickly*]. For me, too.

MISS GARDEN [*quickly*]. Oh, yes, for me, too.

MISS GARDEN, EVA, MISS SELMA MEIER [*pressing* MISS VAYNER, *all talking*]. Surely she can do that. Let her do it. That's permissible. Why not? She only wants a photograph of it. For us all.

MISS VAYNER [*in altered tone, with blissful hope*]. For me, too?

MISS SELMA MEIER [*urging*]. For us all, of course!

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER. Of course for you, too.

[*Stretches out her hand for the picture.*]

MISS VAYNER [*regarding the picture in rapture*]. For me, too!

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER. Give me the picture.

MISS GARDEN *and* MISS SELMA MEIER. For us all, of course! But give her the picture. Don't you hear?

MISS VAYNER. If you'll promise me, that I can really —

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER, MISS GARDEN, *and* MISS SELMA MEIER. Don't you hear? Everybody gets a picture. Give it to her.

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*seizes the picture and presses it to her*]. Everybody gets a picture.

EVA [*suddenly puts her hand to her heart and shrieks; then breathlessly*]. There's not a moment to lose!

[*Dashes off to the right.*]

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*startled by* EVA'S *cry; tragically*]. What has happened?

MISS VAYNER [*startled by* EVA'S *cry*]. Good gracious! [*Starts after her.*]

MISS SELMA MEIER [*steps in front of her; triumphant*]. No! Let her go.

MISS GARDEN. She must go.

MISS VAYNER [*alarmed*]. What ails her?

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER. She was very pale.

MISS GARDEN [*proudly*]. Oh, you know nothing yet.

MISS SELMA MEIER [*triumphant*]. She is going to save the Master.

MISS GARDEN. She is going to save the Master.

MISS VAYNER [*excited, almost crying*]. Good gracious!

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*tragically, with deep voice*]. Oh dear! Oh dear!

MISS VAYNER. What about the Master?

MISS SELMA MEIER [*proudly*]. Oh, you know nothing yet.

MISS VAYNER [*breathless*]. Oh, speak!

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*deep-voiced*]. Oh speak!

MISS SELMA MEIER [*laughing, very quickly*]. You see, the concert —

MISS GARDEN [*breaks in, laughing*]. Yes, the concert —

MISS VAYNER [*eager*]. The concert?

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*anxiously*]. The concert?

MISS SELMA MEIER [*voice pitched very high*]. Is no concert at all, but —

MISS GARDEN [*laughing, drawling*]. No concert at all.

MISS VAYNER [*speechless*]. No concert?

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*pressing the picture to her bosom; urgently, anxiously*]. But? But?

MISS SELMA MEIER [*in high, piercing tone*]. But Mrs. Jura —

MISS VAYNER [*with a short outcry*]. Mrs. Jura?

MISS GARDEN [*drawling*]. Mrs. Delphina Jura.

MISS SELMA MEIER [*high voice*]. Mrs. Delphina Jura has seduced the Master!

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*tragic, deep-voiced*]. Oh dear!

MISS VAYNER [*in an outburst*]. But I had a foreboding of it. [*Begins to cry.*]

MISS SELMA MEIER. They have gone up to the cabin together —

MISS VAYNER [*shudders; crying.*] To the cabin!

MISS SELMA MEIER. Where the Master always —

MISS GARDEN. Yes, that's where the Master usually —

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*deep, hollow voice*]. To the cabin! With her!

MISS VAYNER [*crying*]. And I suspected Mrs. Eva.

MARIE [*opens the left-hand door; invisible*]. Miss Vayner!

MISS VAYNER [*tries to compose herself*]. Yes, ma'am! [*Motions to the ladies to go.*]

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*starts at the sound of* MARIE'S *voice*]. Oh dear!

[*Steals tragically to the anteroom door.*]

MARIE [*entering, perceives the ladies; surprised*]. The ladies are still here?

MISS VAYNER [*embarrassed*]. The ladies were just going to —

MISS SELMA MEIER [*haughty, cool*]. We *are* just going to—[*Bowing curtly.*] Good day. [*Goes to right.*]

MARIE. Don't let me disturb you.

[*Goes into the music-room.*]

MISS GARDEN [*slowly*]. Goodbye.

[*Rustles out to the right with contemptuous mien.*]

MRS. CLAIRE FLODERER [*tragic, with heavy voice*]. And that is his wife.

[*Exit right*].

MISS SELMA MEIER. In that, all men are alike. Even the most exalted.

[*Exit right.* MISS VAYNER *closes the anteroom door behind them, then comes back into the room.*]

MARIE [*comes out of the music-room, flowers in her hand*]. There are still flowers lying everywhere in there. Bring them to me, please. And bring a few vases.

[MISS VAYNER *goes into the music-room.*]

MARIE [*goes to the table and sorts the flowers; then she looks up and scans the room, sniffing; turning up her nose, calling into the music-room*]. And open the windows in there.

[*Sits down by the table, sorting the flowers.*]

MISS VAYNER [*calling back*]. Yes, ma'am!

[*Pause; then she returns, bringing flowers and two vases.*]

MARIE [*takes one of the vases*]. Thank you. [*Filling the vase.*] And Miss Vayner, please endeavor to break the ladies of taking up their residence here. After all, this is not a club-house.

MISS VAYNER [*obedient, with slightly trembling voice*]. Yes, ma'am.

MARIE [*quietly*]. I told you this not long ago, and don't wish to have to say it again. [*Pointing to the vase she has filled.*] On the little table, please.

MISS VAYNER. It shall not happen again. Only today, with the ladies so excited — [*Carries the vase to the right-hand table.*] It was impossible to calm them, Mrs. Hein.

MARIE [*with almost imperceptible irony*]. Were the ladies excited?

MISS VAYNER [*by the right-hand table*]. Yes. Very.

MARIE. And why?

MISS VAYNER. Mistress must surely know how the ladies are, how attached they are to the Master. Well, and when they suddenly heard today that he was going away, to give a concert —

[*Stops short at the word, which jogs her memory; tears fill her eyes again.*]

MARIE. And what objection have the ladies to the concert? [*Pointing to the second vase.*] Put that on the piano, please.

MISS VAYNER [*comes back to the table; very confused*]. No, of course they can have no objection to the concert. No, of course not. But they were.

[*She takes the vase, forgetting where to take it, and looks helplessly around.*]

MARIE [*observes her confusion, watches her, and then repeats quietly*]. On the piano, please.

MISS VAYNER [*startled, hastily*]. Certainly, ma'am. [*Goes into the music-room and takes the vase to the piano; then returning, hoping to be allowed to go.*] Do you need anything else, ma'am?

MARIE. Come here a moment, Miss Vayner. [MISS VAYNER *obeys.*] Come and sit down a moment. [MISS VAYNER *does so.*] Now, look at me, please. [MISS VAYNER *looks up, embarrassed.*] Why, you've been crying.

MISS VAYNER [*confused*]. I? Oh, no!

MARIE. Perhaps the concert does n't suit you, either?

MISS VAYNER. Me? Oh, no. [*Amending.*] Oh, yes.

MARIE. Then what ails you?

MISS VAYNER. Why, nothing, ma'am. Really not.

MARIE. Well, then, why have you been crying?

MISS VAYNER [*begins to cry*]. I have n't been crying.

MARIE. No? And now?

MISS VAYNER [*crying*]. I've only, I've only — [*Wringing her hands.*]

MARIE. Well, what have you?

MISS VAYNER [*crying, wailing*]. My nerves, my nerves, ma'am!

MARIE. But you never used to have any nerves! Never!

MISS VAYNER [*blowing her nose*]. No.

MARIE. Listen now, I want to tell you something.

MISS VAYNER [*blowing her nose*]. Yes.

MARIE. It is your fourth month here. I have been very pleased with you. I was already hoping you would do. You know no one has succeeded yet.

MISS VAYNER [*pleading*]. But, Mrs. Hein, you know I want to —

MARIE [*interrupting*]. Just listen to me, Miss Vayner. You remember what I told you? When you presented yourself? [MISS VAYNER *nods vehemently.*] I told you what you would have to do here, said it was very, very little, and that it would surely be very easy for you and that you would certainly feel very happy with us, but for one great difficulty which exists here, and on which all your predecessors have been shipwrecked. You remember?

MISS VAYNER. Yes, ma'am.

MARIE. I told you that your predecessors had always fallen in love with my husband, and that that repeatedly turned out to be an impossible situation. That, I said to you, is the great difficulty in our house. And you promised me —

MISS VAYNER [*asseverating*]. But, Mrs. Hein!

MARIE. For consider, Miss Vayner, it won't do. Every time it has proved that it won't do. My husband does n't like it at all: his pupils notice it right away and gossip, — you know how the ladies are, — and then I get the blame. For my husband wants peace in his house at least, and I can't blame him for it. And therefore, sorry as I should be to lose you, since I am really very well satisfied with you, there would be nothing else for me to do. Our experiences in that line have been too terrible. And now tell me: would n't it still be possible to avoid that? Perhaps we might still find some remedy. For if you go, and another one comes, in a month it will be the same story over again. The mere thought makes me quite despondent. And so I say, would n't it be possible, Miss Vayner?

MISS VAYNER [*bawling*]. The Master is so handsome!

MARIE [*at her wits' end*]. Yes, but good gracious!

MISS VAYNER [*bawling*]. And I don't want anything, nothing at all. Only don't send me away.

MARIE. That's all very well. But one day my husband will notice it just the same, and then it's all over. You'll see. It makes him too furious. And then I can't help you, either.

MISS VAYNER [*suddenly angry*]. And the ladies of the school? They're all in love with him, too. He does n't say anything about that. Why does he let them?

MARIE. That's different. The ladies of the school — after all, that can't be helped. That belongs to his profession. Don't you see, that's what he gets paid for, that's what we live on. You surely must see that. In his profession he restrains himself. But for that very reason he may well demand to have peace in his own house. I'm only doing this for your own good, you know. I merely warn you. It's the same story over and over again.

MISS VAYNER [*drying her tears, crushed*]. I thank you, ma'am. I thank you very much. [*Seizes* MARIE'S *hand and kisses it.*] You are so good, ma'am.

[*Begins to cry again.*]

MARIE. So I say, take yourself in hand a little. It simply will not do. I shan't be able to help you then. I must do as my husband wishes. [*A knock at the anteroom door.*] Go and see who that is.

[MISS VAYNER *gets up and goes to the door.*]

A VOICE [*outside*]. One moment, Miss Vayner.

[MISS VAYNER *exit right.* MARIE *watches her out of sight, then leans back smiling, her intelligent eyes looking straight ahead; inwardly much amused.*]

MISS VAYNER [*through the anteroom door, with a large bouquet of violets; she brings it to the table and says, emphasizing the name with noticeable compassion*]. It's only the violets from Countess Negra.

[*Goes to chimney and fetches a vase for them.*]

MARIE [*smiles imperceptibly; then once more in her serious, quiet tone, in which only at times a faint trace of irony is heard.*] You see, Miss Vayner, you must n't do that, either.

MISS VAYNER [*startled*]. What, ma'am?

MARIE. You say [*imitating her compassionate tone*] the violets from Countess Negra. With such compassion in your voice, that one involuntarily asks: for pity's sake, what has happened to the poor countess?

MISS VAYNER [*much embarrassed*]. Oh, no, ma'am, surely not.

MARIE. But it sounded like that.

MISS VAYNER [*growing more and more confused*]. Not at all, ma'am! How should I come to do that?

MARIE. It sounded as if you meant to say: this poor countess with her delicate violets, she does n't dream of the concert, either. That is the way it sounded.

MISS VAYNER [*blushing with embarrassment*]. No, ma'am, really, I have no idea —

MARIE [*continuing imperturbably*]. And that can't help attracting my attention, can it? What am I to think? My husband gives a concert, and I learn from you that the ladies are beside themselves over it, and you yourself are all excited, and now you speak of the countess in such a tone that one would think she had met with a great misfortune. Is n't that bound to set me thinking of all sorts of things? Why does it excite the ladies when my husband gives a concert? And why does our maid cry when my husband gives a concert? And why does one commiserate Countess Negra when my husband gives a concert? Must n't it make me suspect that somehow or other there might be some mysterious connection in all this?

MISS VAYNER [*with the utmost agitation*]. No, Mrs. Hein! How could you even imagine it? That is a wretched misunderstanding, I swear to you, no!

MARIE [*hardly able to conceal her amusement any longer*]. No?

MISS VAYNER [*beside herself*]. I swear to you, ma'am!

MARIE. But then you see how careful one must be, and that in your position it is not advisable to be too deeply initiated. Is n't that so?

MISS VAYNER [*beseechingly*]. Forgive me, ma'am!

MARIE. Well, calm yourself. In my case it does n't matter so much, because I am unsuspicious. Only it must n't be made too hard for me, now must it?

MISS VAYNER [*looks dully at her and says mechanically*]. Yes, ma'am.

[*There is a knock at the anteroom door, she goes to it.*]

A VOICE [*outside*]. One moment, Miss Vayner.

[MARIE *follows her with smiling eyes, then rises and carries the vase of the violets into the music-room.*]

MISS VAYNER [*through the anteroom door*]. Mrs. Eva Gerndl insists on speaking with you, ma'am!

MARIE [*coming back; repeating the name, as she cannot place it immediately*]. Eva Gerndl?

MISS VAYNER. One of the ladies. The one with the hair.

[*Outlines in gesture* EVA'S *coiffure.*]

MARIE. Oh, that one? The snake! [*Curtly.*] Tell the lady that my husband will not be back for two days.

MISS VAYNER. No, she said expressly that she wished to speak with Mrs. Hein herself —

MARIE [*shrugging her shoulders, declining*]. I beg to be excused.

[*Goes back into the music-room.*]

MISS VAYNER. Yes, ma'am.

[*Exit right.* MARIE *returns from the music-room, with several unopened, colored notes in her hand; she looks at the addresses, one after the other, and smells of them, turning up her nose; then looks through the room, notices the letters on the small table, inspects and smells of them also, and adds them to the others.*]

MISS VAYNER [*through the anteroom door, a calling card in her hand*]. Mrs. Gerndl begs urgently that you will read what she has written. [*Hands* MARIE *the card.*]

MARIE [*at the right-hand table; takes the card; handing the maid the letters*]. Please don't let these letters lie around everywhere. My husband wishes them to be kept. Perhaps he will read them later on, after he has retired. [*Reads the card; then repeats with a shrug, sotto voce.*] "It is a question of the Master's life or death." [*Looks straight ahead for a moment, quietly; then with a shrug.*] Ask her in.

[MISS VAYNER *exit right with the letters; she ushers* EVA *in, then closes the door.*]

EVA [*comes through the anteroom door, with every sign of the greatest agitation; after making* MARIE *a low bow, breathless*]. Pardon me, dear madam, but I cannot do otherwise. I have done something frightful. Oh, what have I done!

MARIE [*formally*]. Please have a seat.

[*Seats herself on a chair by the right-hand table.*]

EVA. No, for God's sake! Time presses,

else all is lost. [*Wringing her hands.*] And yet it was only for love that I did it. For excess of love, believe me.

MARIE [*very quiet*]. And whom do you love?

EVA [*most astonished; quickly*]. Him, of course, the Master.

MARIE [*feigning astonishment; largo*]. My husband?

EVA [*looks up in utmost surprise, at a loss how to give immediate answer; then embarrassed, meekly*]. Yes, Mrs. Hein.

MARIE [*again quite calm, formally*]. But do please have a seat.

EVA [*seats herself meekly; then, hesitatingly, half in excuse*]. Of course, we all love him.

MARIE [*again greatly astonished*]. Who?

EVA [*innocently*]. All the ladies of the school.

MARIE [*as if scarcely able to restrain her anger any more*]. But that, I must say, is most singular.

EVA [*taken aback*]. Why, did n't you know that?

MARIE [*very vigorously*]. I?

EVA [*anxiously*]. I only mean —

MARIE [*feigning a steadily rising anger*]. Yes, I know, you mean, and you think I could — how can you dare — ?

EVA [*anxious, quickly*]. Of course I may be mistaken.

MARIE. And you come to my residence to tell me that to my face? I must confess that —

EVA. But no, Mrs. Hein, that is n't what I came for at all, but — but won't you please listen to me?

MARIE. Do you love my husband or not?

EVA [*with increasing anxiety and rapidity*]. Why, that does n't make any difference at all now, Mrs. Hein.

MARIE. It makes very much difference to me, Mrs. Gerndl.

EVA [*beseechingly*]. For time is pressing —

MARIE. Do you love my husband or not?

EVA [*very quickly*]. I do love him, certainly, but that does n't matter, Mrs. Hein, for he does n't know it, he will never know it, I swear to you, but save him! Oh, save him! [*Jumps up and runs through the room.*] Oh, what have I done! What have I done!

MARIE [*as soon as* EVA'S *back is turned, shows her face again quietly smiling, understanding; then speaks calmly*]. Well, what *have* you done?

EVA [*comes back to the table*]. You see, you know I was in such a rage, because, for I, of course, I can't help that, I love him, but he does n't know it, he will never know it, I swear to you, I only want to love him in secret, that does n't do any harm, does it, but, so just imagine, I love him so, and when I heard, that is, when I thought, when I imagined — [*Perceiving that she is getting more and more involved, in the greatest fear.*] Good God, and meanwhile time is flying and perhaps [*with an outburst*], perhaps he's already dead!

MARIE [*frightened, serious*]. Well, what *is* it, anyway? Do come to the point.

[*Rises.*]

EVA [*crying*]. I telegraphed Mr. Jura, for you see I only thought he would kill her, and it was n't until afterward that it occurred to me that he might kill him, too. [*Running through the room again*]. Heavens, what have I done! What have I done! I never thought of that.

MARIE [*considering, calmer again*]. Mr. Jura — ? [*Smiling.*] Mr. Jura does n't appear so dangerous to me.

EVA [*rushes forward*]. But you don't know. I telegraphed him that his wife was gone with the Master. And the exact location of the cabin. Oh, what have I done! What have I done!

MARIE. When?

EVA. In an hour they'll be there.

MARIE. No, when did you telegraph?

EVA. Right after I left here. Then when it occurred to me that he might kill him, too, I went right back to the office, but the telegram had already gone. [*With another outburst.*] And what's to be done now?

MARIE [*after calculating; smiling*]. In any case he can't be dead yet. Not time enough.

EVA [*with a glimmer of hope*]. No?

MARIE [*dryly*]. No.

EVA. But what shall we do?

MARIE. I shall do nothing.

EVA [*horrified*]. Mrs. Hein! For mercy's sake!

MARIE. You wired Mr. Jura that my husband has gone away with Mrs. Jura, up to our cabin?

EVA [*nodding quickly*]. Yes.

MARIE. Now if Mr. Jura gets this telegram and it just happens that his wife is really not at home —

EVA [*involuntarily, quickly*]. She is n't at home, because of course —

MARIE [*continuing imperturbably*]. And further, if Mr. Jura thinks so ill of his wife and trusts her so little that he does n't simply throw the telegram into the waste-basket —

EVA [*very quickly*]. Out of the question! No man will do that. And he must know his wife.

MARIE [*continuing imperturbably*]. Well then, then Mr. Jura will take an automobile, drive to the canyon, be there in three hours, and then walk from there to the cabin, which he can easily reach in an hour by a perfectly beautiful path; and the cabin will be empty, and that will be a good lesson to him, to teach him that a man who believes every silly calumny merely makes himself ridiculous. For the cabin will be empty, of course. Did n't my husband tell me that he had a concert? Or do you think my husband lies to me and deceives me?

EVA [*very quickly*]. No, no.

MARIE. Well, then.

EVA [*fearful*]. But if perhaps after all —

MARIE. What?

EVA [*faster and faster*]. If perhaps by some unhappy chance —

MARIE. What kind of a chance?

EVA. I just mean, you don't know this fearful woman, and the Master, in his goodness of heart, who knows —

MARIE. Ah, you mean, if the cabin —

EVA [*hastily*]. Yes, if the cabin were not —

MARIE. If the cabin were not empty?

EVA [*tensely*]. Yes.

MARIE. If my husband had lied to me? If my husband were a wretch?

EVA [*adjuring her*]. Oh, you don't know how dangerous this person is. She has simply ensnared the Master.

MARIE [*coolly*]. Oh, in that case!

EVA [*with the utmost tension*]. In that case?

MARIE [*coolly, slowly*]. In that case Mr. Jura will kill his wife, or my husband, or both, depending on his temperament.

EVA [*shutting both ears*]. Horrible!

MARIE [*coolly, almost to caricature*]. In that case of course I can do nothing. And I must plainly say that a man who deceives me — [*Breaks off with a shrug and a disdainful gesture; then, in a different tone.*] And I can say that the more calmly, as of course I am quite certain that my husband is not deceiving me. Don't you think so?

EVA [*wholly forgetting herself, impetuously*]. But, Mrs. Hein, then I must tell you — [*Stops, frightened.*]

MARIE. What? What could you tell me? We have been married eleven years. In that time I surely ought to have noticed something? Don't you think so?

[EVA *stares at her and can say nothing.*]

MARIE [*amused by her embarrassment*]. But say your say. What were you going to tell me?

EVA [*shakes her head, quite at a loss*]. No, no. Nothing, nothing, really. [*Again dashing across the room.*] What have I done! Wretched me! What have I done!

MARIE. And yet there's such a simple remedy.

EVA [*rushes at her; with a last gleam of hope*]. Yes? What?

MARIE. Simply go to Mr. Jura's house. You will surely find him at home, and with his wife.

EVA [*once more looks at* MARIE, *disconcerted, then gives up; quickly*]. You are right. [*Runs to the anteroom door, but immediately returns once more; formally*]. Pardon me, Mrs. Hein, for disturbing you. It must have been an error.

[*A deep bow, which her haste makes very awkward, then exit right.*]

MARIE. And do not forget to tell Mr. Jura who sent him the telegram.

[*When* EVA *is gone, her face be-*

comes serious, and she stands a moment in thought, then goes to the anteroom door and rings.]

[MISS VAYNER *appears in the doorway.*]

MARIE. Please look and see if Mr. Jura has a telephone. Mr. Frank Jura. If he has one, please ask if he is at home. And give him my name and say that I wish to speak with him and call me. But do it right away.

MISS VAYNER. Yes, ma'am.

[*Exit, leaving the door open; the telephone bell is heard to ring.*]

MARIE [*impatient, walks up and down; she is now very serious; after a pause, calling impatiently toward the right*]. Well, Miss Vayner?

MISS VAYNER [*calling*]. Right away, ma'am. [*Again the telephone bell is heard.*]

[MARIE *again pacing restlessly; she picks at the flowers and can scarcely control herself.*]

MISS VAYNER [*appears in the doorway*]. Mr. Jura is not at home. He left scarcely half an hour ago.

[MARIE *merely nods briefly, stands in thought.*]

A VOICE [*outside, to the right; calling*]. Miss Vayner!

[MARIE *goes into the music-room.*]

MISS VAYNER [*disappears and at once returns in haste*]. Mr. Jura would like to speak with you.

MARIE [*in the music-room, coming forward, pleased*]. At the telephone? Was he there — ?

MISS VAYNER. No, it is Mr. Jura himself. He is here.

MARIE [*very happily*]. He is here? Show him in.

[*She cannot but laugh, and now has herself fully under control.* MISS VAYNER *exit right, ushers* JURA *in, and closes the door behind him.*]

[JURA 25; *short, slight, seemingly frail; all his force seems concentrated in his head, which looks disproportionately large; smooth, fair hair, cut short, his forehead very prominent, large, very bright, very jolly blue eyes, which, when he becomes vivacious in conversation, almost seem to project, with an almost staring expression; he stands crooked and has a habit of holding his elbows tight against his body and gesturing only with his forearms, making him at times not unlike a marionette; in conversation he likes to advance quite close to his interlocutor, and feels the need of taking him by the hand and twisting one of his buttons, or pulling a thread out of his coat; he is very engaging and adaptable, and his whole manner conveys a certain pleading, coaxing air, while at the same time it is clear that at bottom he is laughing at everybody, stands in awe of none, and is accustomed to take liberties; he has all kinds of strange ways, as, for instance, never standing still, but constantly hopping from one foot on to the other, or, when impatient — his customary condition — scraping both feet; this gives his whole being a leaping, flickering character, he is like a candle in the hand of a tipsy man; his carriage is so slovenly that at first glance one takes him to be poorly dressed, and only gradually discovers, with surprise, how expensively, though to be sure quite unfashionably, he is dressed, only that his clothes hang about him as about a beanpole; if at first he almost looks like a discharged actor, presently one rather takes him for a person who likes to wear a ridiculous disguise; he wears a crumpled, light gray Italian soft hat, a soft blue shirt with a badly tied white tie, a very loose suit of coarse raw silk, which has very many, very large pockets, with newspapers, books, and a quantity of pencils in them, blue socks, and yellow sandals; he enters quickly through the anteroom door, tumbling into the room, looks curiously at* MARIE, *laughs, nods laughingly at her, and waits to hear what she will say.*]

MARIE [*looks at him with a smile, immediately set wholly at rest by his appearance, and then says, merely to say something*]. Mr. Jura?

JURA [*laughing*]. Do you still know me?

Of course we have often seen each other in company, at a distance. [*Laughing, half excusing.*] My wife drags me around everywhere.

MARIE [*going to the sofa and sitting down*]. Yes, I have had the pleasure. [*Invites him to be seated.*] Please be seated.

JURA [*threatening her with his finger*]. We shall see whether it is a pleasure. [*Looking through the room, perceiving the flowers; seriously.*] But you should n't do that. Have you no garden?

MARIE [*surprised*]. Oh, yes. Why?

JURA. Then why don't you leave the flowers in the garden? Flowers belong in the garden.

MARIE. They are so beautiful, they make the whole room bright.

JURA [*seriously, impersonally*]. If any one wanted to cut off your head, — you are beautiful, too. It is base to cut flowers, because it hurts them. And is n't it uncomfortable for you to sit among corpses? [*Takes the vase from the little table and puts it on the left-hand table.*] Terrible, that people don't understand the simplest things. If people hurt each other, why let them, there is at least some sense in that; for it enlivens. But to hurt the poor flowers, that can't even defend themselves! [*Returns to the little table and looks smiling at* MARIE, *with a coaxing glance.*] Are you offended? Oh, no!

MARIE [*smiling*]. No.

JURA [*heartily*]. You understand? Nobody must ever take offence at me. For I don't mean it that way. [*Sits.*] And of course you are very clever.

MARIE [*merrily*]. You think so?

JURA [*looks her squarely in the eye*]. Why, any one can *see* that. I mean, not clever with the head, that's no good either. No, one must be clever like a dog, with the nose.

MARIE [*clutches involuntarily at hers*]. With the nose?

JURA [*seriously*]. In man it is an inward nose, as it were. That is why you struck me right away.

MARIE. But you have never spoken with me.

JURA. Why, you can't talk in company. Heaven forbid! So when I encounter some one above the average in company, I think to myself: Now be sure not to make his or her acquaintance, for you 'll only spoil them for yourself. Because, you see, if a stupid person says something stupid — that's not so bad. But when a clever person does it, that's horrible. But in company even the cleverest person says only stupid things, because he must or he 'll become unpopular, because he 's a suspicious character as it is.

MARIE. You, too?

JURA [*tickled*]. No, I'm permitted. I can be clever, they let me do it. Because it is my specialty to pass for cracked.

MARIE [*somewhat haughtily*]. And that gives you pleasure?

JURA [*gravely*]. No.

MARIE. Otherwise, of course, you would n't go into society.

JURA [*with utter gravity*]. Why, I *don't* go. My wife takes me along.

[*Looks up and laughs.*]

MARIE [*smiling*]. So that's your case?

JURA [*nods*]. The reverse of yours. The cleverer half is always the victim.

MARIE [*slightly displeased*]. But you hardly know my husband.

JURA. I have seen him.

MARIE [*piqued*]. Do you think it very tactful — ?

JURA [*tickled*]. You shall be astonished to see how tactless I am. [*Serious.*] People are so tactful that they never reach an understanding. Instead of telling each other frankly: I am thus and so, I like this and I don't like that, and in return you may be this way and that way, like this and not like that, up to this point extends my territory, up to that point yours, and now let's be good neighbors. It's true, my dear lady! You can get along with a dog and you can get along with a cat, but you must know whether it's a dog or a cat. But our so-called tact prevents that. Clarity is what we need, clarity is the only thing; then everything will be possible. And there is no clarity except among the tactless.

MARIE. You like to hear yourself talk.

JURA. Very much. For it is a pleasure to listen to a person who is clear about himself.

MARIE. It is very kind of you to afford me this pleasure too.

JURA. But that is not really the reason for my being here.

MARIE. I thought it was.

JURA [*laughing*]. No, I am not so philanthropic, not at all. [*Looks at her.*] I suppose you are terribly curious to know what I do want. It is comical enough. [*In a different tone; naïve.*] No doubt you have heard much about me? [*Suddenly startled, as* MARIE *looks at him with a smile.*] Why are you looking at me? Have I—? [*Clutches at his tie.*] No, I actually have my tie on. I so easily forget it and then the ladies always look at me. But I have it, what more do you want? [*Looks laughingly at her.*] You have such an agreeably clever face. I am certainly not deceived in you. Well?

MARIE [*adopting his inquiring tone*]. Well?

JURA. Ah, yes, you are right, it is my move. Do you know my wife?

MARIE [*cool*]. We have met.

JURA. Don't be embarrassed.

MARIE. I have no means of judging her.

JURA. You are embarrassed.

MARIE. She is one of my husband's pupils.

JURA. But you have nothing else against her?

MARIE. Why?

JURA. Because I have something else against your husband.

MARIE [*rejecting his tone*]. I love my husband.

JURA. I love my wife.

MARIE. Then we are at one.

JURA. Except for one thing. It is a large difference. You see, my wife is false to me. Just think. Quite certainly.

MARIE. And to tell me that — ?

JURA [*nods*]. Yes. That is why I am here. You have a little time, have n't you? And it surely interests you. That always interests a woman.

MARIE. Why, it is very flattering for me, that you should come just to me for advice, and yet I don't know —

JURA. Advice? No. Oh, no! Only I am not clear in my mind what I ought to do. I must think about it.

MARIE. And so you are doing your thinking in my presence?

JURA [*nods*]. For proper thought demands that one think out loud. I need that. When I don't know what to do, I ask somebody, but not to learn something from his answer: when I ask him, the answer comes to me of its own accord. Just try it, you will see. And it works best with a person who is nothing to you, and to whom you are nothing, so that the whole procedure is purely objective. Just like you in this case. That's why. And what I ask of you is so little. Is n't it? You have a little time, I hope?

MARIE [*slowly*]. Willingly. You are surely right. For I believe we have a certain similarity of tone, you and I. Hence we shall readily understand each other. [*They measure each other for a moment.*] And it pleases me to see a person, without much ado, show himself exactly as he is.

JURA [*struck by her last words, looks searchingly at her, uncertain whether he has understood her aright, and how much she really knows; suddenly, in a wholly different tone, carelessly*]. You have a good neck. I mean: well formed. You should n't lock it up so tight. [*Touching his collar.*] Open it up, why don't you? If people must put on clothes, at least not more than is absolutely necessary. You'll see, we shall yet get over that entirely.

MARIE. I don't have to follow all the new fads.

JURA. You ought to! One always ought to. For there is no choice but to follow the new fads or the old ones. The new ones are at least a change. [*Graciously.*] But as you will.

MARIE. If you don't insist on it.

JURA [*dryly.*] Often it sounds as if you were making fun of me. But I don't object.

MARIE. No?

JURA. Only one must know it. And you will permit me for my part to remain serious, because that is my nature.

MARIE. Pray do.

[*Again they measure each other for a moment.*]

JURA. Very good. — I have already informed you that my wife is false to me, as

we are wont to call it when a man notices that his wife is beginning to prefer another man. This has certainly been the case with mine for some time. How far she has gone toward the logical conclusion, I do not know. But it seems — At least I have just now received a telegram from an unknown benefactor, saying that she has gone away, with that man whom she is inclined to prefer to me. Actually she did go away today. According to her assurance: to visit an aunt. Whom, there can be no doubt, she really has. Now, the friendly communicant informs me with very praiseworthy exactitude where she is to be found. It would not be so very far, it is said to be a lovely spot, and the weather is beautiful. But I am still more or less uncertain, nevertheless, whether to undertake the expedition or not. And the principal thing seems to me, as you will have already observed, that in any event one should first of all make clear to himself what he really wants. Don't you think so? But that is just what I don't know at present.

MARIE [*noticeably impatient*]. Have you the telegram with you?

JURA [*not at all embarrassed, quite unconcerned; quickly*]. Yes. Here. [*Dips into one pocket, then another, then a third, pulling out notebooks, a roll of newspapers, and several books, lays them on the table, and says, pointing to one of the books, in an objectively informing tone.*] There's a very singular book that some one has written. He says that the life of man moves in regular waves, good and bad waves. Or that in our life there are, so to speak, series, like the red and black series on the roulette wheel. He remarks for example — [*turns the pages, looking for the passage*] wait, where *is* that?

MARIE [*half vexed, half impatient*]. Is that an indispensable part of it?

JURA [*acts as if he had been absent-minded and merely forgotten; closes the book and continues, clearing his pockets*]. Oh! No, it really is n't. And yet again, it really is. Because ultimately everything in life is a part of it, each a part of all, and if in astronomy we learn that something is different from what we previously supposed, then little by little all the rest of our life must be changed by it, and the only wretched part of it is that people find it so hard to make up their minds to this. Thus, for example, if the man is right about his series and it turns out that I am just now in a black series, the tragic one, you know, then what shall I — ? [*Has emptied his pockets, stops short; with a shrug.*] I must have left the telegram somewhere.

MARIE. That will please your maid.

JURA [*dryly*]. She certainly has no need of it.

MARIE. Then you seem to believe that the telegram tells the truth?

JURA. Certainly. — I was n't even surprised. For I could see an aunt in my wife's face.

MARIE. And you did not try to prevent her?

JURA [*looking up in surprise, staring at her with his great eyes; suddenly very serious, and in a peculiar tone*]. Prevent? Prevent a human being from seeking happiness? Or what he thinks is happiness? No, I should never care to do that. [*Again in a different tone, dryly.*] And it is no use. [*Again in his serious and resolute tone.*] No, if she believes it is her happiness. And the question is only whether it is her happiness.

MARIE. And you?

JURA [*wondering, because he does not understand what she means*]. I?

MARIE. Yes.

JURA. What about me?

MARIE. Something depends on you, too.

JURA. Oh, no. If it is really her happiness, she is right. In fact, that is probably the only right there is, which no one, for no reason on earth, may deny his fellowman.

MARIE. You do not love your wife. For otherwise —

JURA [*quickly, almost vehemently*]. For otherwise, you mean, I must make every effort to make her unhappy. Is that it?

MARIE [*taken aback*]. Or you love her with an almost superhuman love.

JURA [*irritated, vehement*]. I am a perfectly ordinary person, not at all "super," I must insist on that. And besides, I really don't know whether I love my wife, because I don't know whether I can love *any*

one person, because I had rather love all people, or at least several.

MARIE. That is too much for me.

JURA [*irritated, leaping up, gesturing*]. As soon as something is quite simple and self-evident, it's too much for everybody! [*Going to the left-hand table in his vexation.*] They find nothing natural but the high-flown. [*Pointing to a vase of tulips.*] You love tulips?

MARIE [*curious to see what he is driving at*]. Yes.

JURA. Very much?

MARIE. Very much.

JURA [*pointing to a vase of violets*]. You love violets?

MARIE. Yes.

JURA. Very much?

MARIE [*merrily*]. Very much.

JURA. And you never think of saying: Hold, that won't do, I must n't love the violets, because I already love the tulips. [*Returning to the little table; shouting.*] Or do you?

MARIE [*laughing*]. No.

JURA. No! [*Gesticulating.*] Well then, well then, well then! What an unreasonable demand, that I must bury all my great, lovely emotion in one single person. But of course that's only our old exploded senseless property conception, transferred from things to persons, where it becomes wholly unendurable. The natural thing would be to love everybody. But because everything that is natural is a sin, man must be compelled to love just one person.

MARIE. But then your wife is right, if she — if in addition to the tulip she seeks out a violet.

JURA [*quickly*]. Yes, if it were that. But no. That's not it. You don't know my wife. She's still completely bound up in the Either-Or.

MARIE. Have n't you taught her that yet?

JURA. Why, you see, that is a defect in me: I have such respect for the spiritual freedom of my fellow-man, that even in his stupidity I don't like to disturb him. [*As* MARIE *laughs.*] No, seriously, that is my greatest fault. And for that reason my wife thinks I don't care about her, and feels herself neglected. But because I myself regard it as an importunity when any one tries to labor with me, — with my soul, I mean, — and because I think that every one must settle such things with himself, I thought it was better to leave her alone, until she should find herself in the course of her own development. I see now that that was perhaps wrong. In time one sees everything, but too late. For the result was that she gradually thought herself quite forsaken. And then — of course. [*Vehemently.*] And that's why I say that our famous tact is all nonsense. The thing to do is to take hold of a person good and hard, to put him on the right road. And especially women seem to want that. Don't they?

MARIE. So you are going to take hold of her good and hard now?

JURA. That's just what I don't know. For perhaps it's already too late. Now she's already up there with the other man. And everything would still be all right, if I only knew what sort of man he is. [*Advancing to her and sitting beside her on the sofa.*] For you see, my wife, who as I say is still wholly in the Either-Or stage, not at all violets and tulips, my wife unquestionably fancies again that this is the Great Love. Now if the man only imagines the same thing, why then everything would be well.

MARIE [*wondering*]. And you?

JURA [*laughing; but naïvely, not cynically*]. Never fear, I'll find another, too. [*Suddenly vexed, almost desperate.*] Oh, you don't understand me. People simply won't understand it. I'm not like that. I love my wife really very dearly, but whether she just happens to be with me, or thinks she is better off with some one else, that does n't matter so much. And if I am fond of her, that's no reason for taking it amiss if she does what in her opinion is the best thing for her. Otherwise it would be terrible to be loved. And similarly, if I love her, that's no reason, for goodness' sake, why I should n't perhaps love another woman just as much. And if a person has a certain talent for loving, why should we restrict him so in it? I don't know what's

the matter with people. We're forever hearing that everybody is to try to develop his aptitudes as much as possible. So that's only logical then, is n't it?

MARIE. Well, your wife is logical.

JURA [*very animated*]. And she's right. As to that, all sensible people think alike nowadays. Only that some say it openly and others don't. But those who don't say it are the ones to act it most. Don't you think so?

MARIE. But then what more do you want, if you conclude that she is right? Then why not let her alone? In that case it's very simple.

JURA [*quickly*]. She is right, but I am afraid. That's the trouble. [*Slower, again very grave, softly.*] Afraid for her. Because I don't know this man. Because therefore I don't know whether she is not deceived in him. For it might be that what is to her *the* great happiness, might be for him perhaps only an adventure. [*Quite softly.*] And that would be terrible for her, I know her. From that I must preserve her.

MARIE [*after a slight pause, softly*]. My dear sir, you love your wife.

JURA [*vehemently*]. But that's what I've been telling you all along.

MARIE [*vehemently*]. But then don't give her up.

JURA [*vehemently*]. But if it's better for her. If he's the kind of man that she can be happy with.

MARIE [*vehemently*]. But if you love her.

JURA [*despairing*]. Oh, but you're slow of understanding.

MARIE. That I certainly do not understand.

JURA [*quickly*]. Well, don't you love your husband?

MARIE. Yes.

JURA [*quickly*]. And?

MARIE [*looking steadily at him*]. And? What?

JURA [*recollecting, hesitating*]. Oh. — [*Quickly.*] No, I was just thinking. But let's suppose a case, let's assume, one can assume something, I take it?

MARIE. Yes. What?

JURA. Let's assume that your husband had fallen in love with another woman —

MARIE. And?

JURA. Well and, and wanted to leave you, we'll assume. What then?

MARIE. I would fight for him with my whole strength.

JURA [*surprised, naïve*]. Really?

MARIE. With my whole strength or cunning, with every weapon that I could command.

JURA. Really! [*Stands up and goes away from the sofa.*] And you look so sensible. [*After a few paces; reflecting.*] But that's it, that makes it so much more difficult. [*Again turns to her; in a different tone.*] Do you know what my first thought was, when the telegram came?

[*At the word he involuntarily grasps at one of his coat pockets.*]

MARIE [*observes it; innocently*]. Are you quite sure you have n't the telegram with you?

JURA [*calmly lying*]. Quite. You know I looked once. [*Pretends to look again.*] It's certainly lying on my table.

MARIE. Well, what was your first thought?

JURA [*advances to the table and sits down*]. It is such a pity that you don't know my wife better. Then you could understand why I am afraid. You see, she has an almost pathetic longing for the Beautiful [*with a shrug*], what people call the Beautiful, and thinks there must be some way of catching it, as it were. Which is the error of most human beings, who hope that beauty, scattered as it is all over the world and in an infinity of parts, can somewhere, some time, be found wholly concentrated in a single specimen. And so she stands with open mouth before the world, and the roast pigeons of fortune are to fly into it. We are acquainted with a poet, and he is forever calling her a "seeker." I find that a horrible word, but I can imagine some meaning in it, the poet certainly not. Well, and the first pigeon was myself. [*Excusingly.*] Up there in the snow — you know I was a penniless student and had hired out to the hotel as teacher of winter sports, and the young ladies learned skeeing of me, — up there in the snow I suppose I may have seemed very desirable to them.

[*Laughs.*] And you know my wife has the trait of always wanting to have the best of everything. And when she wants anything, she is very extreme. That is how it happened.

MARIE. You fell in love with her?

JURA. I was really never exactly asked. And I was completely dazzled by her beauty, by her whole manner, which was wholly new to a poor devil like me, and of course by her wealth, too. That of course. For I must say it was very agreeable to me to marry riches. You see, it is an indispensable part of the education of a fully developed man that he should scorn wealth, and of course you can only do that if you have it. In short, we were very happy. But in town she seems little by little to have found that here I am perhaps not the best after all, and so the seeker gradually began to seek again. [*In a different tone.*] By the way, you must not take too literally everything I say, for I sometimes color things, which, however, makes no ultimate difference, since nobody ever knows just how such things have really come about. In any case I am to blame for everything, if there is such a thing as guilt in connection with natural phenomena. And if things turn out ill now, I should really feel deeply ashamed of myself.

MARIE [*thoughtfully*]. You are a strange person.

JURA. Don't hesitate to say that I am a comical person. People always think that when anybody does the natural thing.

MARIE. And now when the telegram came today?

JURA. Yes — now when the telegram came today, my first thought was to drive to the spot. But only for fear that she might perhaps be deceived in the man, in her disappointment with me and with her bent for always reaching out for everything that glitters. So I say, to drive to the spot and confront this man and — [*Observing* MARIE'S *anxious face; suddenly laughing heartily.*] Oh, no, not what you think. [*Pantomime of firing a pistol.*] Not bang-bang! [*Stands up, laughing heartily.*] No, no! Do I look like that? So very knightly? That is an error. No, but to drive there and confront the two of them, without any weapons, and merely to say to them, quite simply: Why this concealment? You can have each other. Well, then the truth must come out, don't you think? For either the man will be overjoyed and embrace me and leap for joy, and that will be a sign that he feels as she does, that it is for him the Great Happiness, for him, too — well, then bravo! Or it may also be that the man will get a great fright. [*The idea makes him laugh.*] Yes, that may happen too. [*Passing suddenly from laughter to gravity.*] Poor Delly! But after all it's better to know it at once. It will hurt her a little, to be sure. But never mind, she must surely see that it's better to be waked somewhat roughly, out of her first slumber as it were, before she has had time to enter deeply into her dream. And I shall comfort her, never fear.

MARIE. The plan is not bad. Then you would have clarity in any case.

JURA. But I have quite forgotten one thing: the man has a wife, too.

MARIE [*astonished, drawling*]. Oh! That complicates it, to be sure.

JURA. Very much. For even if everything else agrees, and my fear was baseless, if the man really loves my wife, just as she loves him, there is still this question left: What shall we do with his wife?

MARIE. Yes. What shall we do with his wife?

JURA. Of course everything depends in the first instance on whether she is sensible or not.

MARIE. It is always better to assume that in such matters a woman is not sensible.

JURA. That would be terrible. For stupid women are veritable genuises at tangling the simplest human relations.

MARIE. But what good would it do if she were a sensible woman?

JURA. Why, then the day is won.

MARIE. How so?

JURA. Well, we'll say to her: Now these two love each other. A sensible woman must surely understand that.

MARIE. I don't believe that. No woman is as sensible as that.

JURA [*vexed*]. But what does the person want?

MARIE. Her husband.

JURA. But if he loves the other woman.

MARIE. She will hope what you fear: that for her husband it is perhaps only an adventure.

JURA [*impatiently*]. But the man has already been asked and has stated, we'll assume, that it is not.

MARIE. But she, who knows her husband, will maintain that he has often been in error. And she will say: let's wait and see, oftentimes what looked like the great passion has turned out to be only a tiny flame, let's wait and see.

JURA [*furious*]. Yes, and she could always say that. Again and again: let's wait and see. Well, and how long? And what's to be done with the two of them meanwhile? Shall they two for the nonce, experimentally, until we know whether it's a real love or an episode — ? Which you might say would be the opposite of a separation from bed and board, turned around, would n't it? No, no, I don't like that at all.

MARIE. And even if the wife had the feeling that it was more than an adventure to her husband, she will still say, if I know women: But I have this man now —

JURA. But then she would n't have him any more, or at most only in name.

MARIE. Perhaps that is enough for her.

JURA. But since he no longer belongs to her in spirit, what has she of him?

MARIE. And what has she otherwise? If she gives him up in name too, then what has she?

JURA. Well I don't know what I can do for her.

MARIE. What has she then, I say? No longer even the hope that he will perhaps some day come back to her after all, not even the pleasure of his familiar presence, not even the sound of his voice in the house, to remind her sometimes of happier days. Now, when he comes back, from the other woman or women —

JURA [*startled, outraged*]. You surely don't believe that he —

MARIE. Why, we're just assuming, are n't we, we're just supposing a case.

JURA [*only half reassured*]. Yes, of course.

MARIE [*continuing*]. And so, when he comes home, sometimes he still sits down with her of an evening and they play chess —

JURA [*quickly*]. You play chess? My wife does n't.

MARIE. Or dominoes, we can assume that, just as you wish.

JURA. No, chess is very good, I can imagine it, I myself like chess very much. And so —

MARIE [*continuing*]. And so there the two sit, the faithless husband and the poor wife, and play chess, and for half an hour, face to face with his beloved form, she can once more imagine that everything is really as it used to be, in the happy time of young love. That is not much, but is it something.

JURA [*thoughtfully*]. Yes, I can imagine that. [*Paces thoughtfully to and fro.*]

MARIE. And what should induce the poor woman to give this up too? Don't you think yourself that that is asking a good deal of her?

JURA [*to and fro, thoughtfully*]. One would really have to find some one for her.

MARIE [*not understanding at once*]. What?

JURA [*to and fro, thoughtfully, casually*]. Some one else, who will play chess with her.

MARIE [*quickly*]. Oh, in that case! [*Looks up and has to laugh, but checks herself again at once.*] Then of course. Yes, if the wife is n't expected to seal up her own life for the sake of another woman. If in place of the old life a new one is opened up. Yes, in that case — perhaps!

JURA [*to and fro, only half listening, busy with his thoughts*]. That would really be an idea.

MARIE [*eagerly*]. And that's the only way to get a real test of the man.

JURA [*attentive, coming to a standstill*]. A real test?

MARIE. For as long as the man still has the feeling that his wife is sitting forsaken and mourning for him and waiting to see if he won't come back to her after all, that is such an agreeable feeling for a man that it proves nothing if at first he decides to choose the other one.

JURA [*listening eagerly and considering*]. You think so? Of course you ought to know men.

MARIE [*smiling*]. Why, ask yourself!

JURA [*surprised*]. I? Why, I'm not a — [*stops and corrects himself*] no, what people nowadays call a "man," I certainly am not.

MARIE [*continuing*]. But, but if on the other hand the man actually can endure the thought that his wife, the former one, is beginning a new life, a life without him, a life with another man, if his love for the second one is so strong that he can even get over that, then it is no adventure, then you can risk it, then it must surely be the Great Passion, the supreme one.

JURA [*eagerly*]. Yes, yes, you are right, that would be the best test, men really seem to be like that. And now see what a remarkable coincidence we have here. For all the while since I began to consider giving up my wife, if she can really be happier with another man, I've constantly been thinking that in that case I want to look around too, and marry again as soon as possible. I should n't like to live alone any more, in an empty house — [*as* MARIE *smiles*] no, I mean, not by day, either — for I must say that marriage has suited me very well. To live with a woman, there's something wonderful about it. And I don't know whether it makes so very much difference which one it is. I wonder whether we don't overdo the idea that it must be just this one and no other. I don't know. I think marriage as such is perfectly beautiful, quite in general, marriage per se, probably with any woman. Of course if she is n't a positive monster.

MARIE [*smiling*]. Well, that's one thing you 'd have to find out, whether she was a monster.

JURA [*comes to a stand behind the table and looks at* MARIE *searchingly; gravely, with conviction*]. No, no. It would surely be a success.

MARIE. The only difficulty will be that she may think you are perhaps merely playing a game with her —

JURA [*interrupting, asseverating*]. Oh, no!

MARIE. Merely to frighten the other woman or to alienate the man from her by jealousy; for of course no woman would surrender herself to any such purpose.

JURA. But who thinks of any such thing?

MARIE [*looking squarely at him*]. Not you?

JURA [*from honest conviction*]. Not I! [*Quickly.*] How glad I am. For really, that was the worst of it, to have to go about a long search for another one, and I so unskilled in such matters. I should certainly have made a fool of myself. No, it must absolutely not be a game, if for no other reason that if you try to make a game out of such a thing, you never succeed, for in that case your play is bad from the very start.

MARIE [*with gentle irony*]. Yes, it is better to play with conviction.

JURA [*looking constantly at her, more and more eagerly*]. And you know, really, I can't imagine anything more lovely. Don't you see, to get to know a woman of entirely different stamp from my wife. And perhaps anyway, as long as men are young, they ought first to become acquainted with marriage in general, so to speak, with marriage and women in general, so as gradually to become so far developed that he can then make the right choice and be able to judge for himself what kind of woman is best suited for him — which surely calls for a certain spiritual maturity, that only comes in later years. Gracious, I am still so young, you see.

MARIE [*with gentle irony*]. But you had better not say that to this woman.

JURA. What?

MARIE. That you are really taking her as a preceptress more than anything else.

JURA [*quickly*]. Why, that is flattering for her.

MARIE. Who knows?

JURA [*advancing one step, eager*]. And what do you think?

MARIE. What?

JURA [*slowly*]. Do you believe that if I make this woman a serious proposal, do you believe —

MARIE [*smiling*]. Wholly serious?

JURA. Yes. And do you believe that she —

MARIE [*gravely, slowly*]. I can imagine that if she is a sensible woman, and if she has the feeling that for her husband it is more than a mere adventure —

JURA [*quickly interrupting*]. It is surely more.

MARIE [*smiling, quickly*]. Just now you were not so certain.

JURA [*positively, quickly*]. But the more I think of it! And so, if she has the feeling that for her husband it is more than a mere adventure —?

MARIE. And if you succeed in inspiring her with confidence in you —

JURA [*quickly*]. Oh, I shall.

MARIE [*slowly*]. Then —

JURA [*intent*]. Then?

MARIE [*slowly*]. Then I could well imagine —

[*Stops, looks at him with a smile and nods.*]

JURA [*looks at her gravely for another moment; then suddenly, hastily, in a very light tone*]. Well, then let's do it, shall we? But then let's start right away. [*Takes his hat and runs to the door.*] I have an automobile here.

MARIE [*feigning surprise*]. But what? Who? Did n't you say —

JURA [*impatiently*]. *Please*, no more long-winded discussion now!

MARIE [*rises; merrily*]. So you lied to me?

JURA [*laughing*]. No, for of course you knew.

MARIE. But how did you know that I knew?

JURA [*presses the electric button by the anteroom door*]. But of course.

MARIE. No, not at all. How could you know?

[MISS VAYNER *through the ante-room door.*]

JURA [*to* MISS VAYNER]. Mrs. Hein's things. She is going out driving. Quickly, quickly! [MISS VAYNER *exit right.*]

JURA [*looking after her, laughing*]. She, too. Your husband seems to make them all melancholy. Just wait, I'll cheer the house up.

MARIE. But how could you know that I knew?

JURA [*vexed, putting his hand in his pocket*]. Why, is n't the telegram from you?

MARIE [*vexed*]. You could think that I — ?

JURA. Who else?

[*Pulls the telegram out of his pocket.*]

MARIE. Why, you *have* the telegram!

JURA. Of course.

MARIE. But you told me —

JURA. Never tell superfluous truth. [*Merrily.*] And then it might not have been quite tactful, eh? [*Grave again.*] But if the telegram is not from you, then how could you know?

MARIE [*going to the left-hand door*]. Your informant was so kind as to notify me, too. [*At the door, coquettishly.*] But the main thing is still lacking.

JURA [*going toward the table; wondering*]. What is that?

MARIE. You have n't yet won my confidence.

JURA. Have no fear. Are n't we going to have a three-hour drive together in the automobile? [*Taking the things from the table and putting them back into his pockets; impatiently.*] But do make haste, or we shall be too late. [*Suddenly grave.*] I should not like to be too late.

MARIE. Have no fear. We shall not be too late. I know my husband. My husband takes his time.

JURA [*looks at her, then grasps her meaning and has to laugh*]. Oh! [*Shrugging his shoulders, philosophically.*] And after all, suppose he did n't!

CURTAIN

SECOND ACT

The big room to the left of the cabin. Furnished like a peasant's room. Pine wood.

In the left foreground, a small door to the second room of the cabin. In the centre wall, door to corridor and kitchen. Window to right. In the corner to the left of the central door a large old tile stove. To the right of the middle door, against the wall, a very broad old black sofa. In the middle of the room a square table with four rustic chairs; above it

an old-fashioned hanging lamp. On the left wall, between stove and door, a sideboard. Flower-pots in the windows. Everywhere, as decoration, old painted plates, mugs, coffee cups. At the window a sewing-table and an upholstered chair.

POLLINGER *in the forties; his very thick, close-cropped hair is already quite gray at the temples; short, thick moustache, also turning gray, otherwise clean shaven; a broad, very red face, with angry eyes and heavy bones; thick-set, stocky, not just tall; a type of the rustic gourmand and tippler who is aging and will not admit it, but is tormented by fear of a stroke; jacket, leather breeches, woolen socks, thick felt shoes; lies on the sofa, a heavy cloth wrapped around his knees, fast asleep, snoring; in front of the sofa, on the ground, his stick.*

MRS. POLLINGER [*nearing* 40; *tall, stately, massive, a powerful, alert, quick-tongued person, who tolerates no interference; outside*]. Hey, Pollinger! Don't ye hear? Pollinger!

[*Enters through the centre door and slams it.*]

POLLINGER [*awakes, begins to sit up, immediately jumps with pain, and his hand goes to his knee*]. Gosh a'mighty!

MRS. POLLINGER [*contemptuously*]. Oh, o' course, there he lies sleepin' again.

POLLINGER [*rubbing his knee; angrily*]. Wall, ef ye know I'm sleepin', then let me be. [*Lamenting.*] Gosh a'mighty! Can't ye leave a sick man in peace?

[*Lying down again.*]

MRS. POLLINGER. Listen, Pollinger! Git up! The Master's comin'!

POLLINGER [*throwing off the cover, leaping up, quite transformed with joy*]. Hooray! The Master? Is it true? Reelly true? [*Bends down to pick up his stick, again feels the pain in his knee.*] Jerusalem! [*Angry, to his wife.*] Can't ye pick up my stick for me, when ye see I need it?

MRS. POLLINGER [*picks it up for him and looks at him contemptuously*]. Fine ye look! Shame on ye!

POLLINGER. Gout's no shame.

MRS. POLLINGER. But boozin' is! When ye can't stand it any more.

POLLINGER [*limping along with his stick; cheered*]. The Master's comin'! The master's comin'!

MRS. POLLINGER [*seems not so pleased; surveying him contemptuously once more*]. The Master keeps himself better. He has n't got the gout yet.

[*Goes to the sideboard and takes out dishes.*]

POLLINGER. An' when's he comin', hey? Lordy, the Master! I'm cur'us to see what he's picked out this time. Begun to get reel anxious about him. [*Figuring up.*] F'r it must be a good year an' a ha'f ago. Ye know, that time with the countess.

MRS. POLLINGER [*urging him on impatiently*]. Wall, git on with ye, do! What ye standin' there for? What ye waitin' for?

POLLINGER [*startled*]. Why, ye spose he's comin' today?

MRS. POLLINGER [*putting a tray with glasses and cups on the table*]. Any minute.

POLLINGER [*excited*]. Land sakes! Bring me my shoes.

MRS. POLLINGER. The postmaster down in the canyon jist sent up word, he telegraphed him, the boy jist came. So git a move on ye. [*Grumbling.*] Ye know how he is. Everything's got to go double quick.

POLLINGER [*angry*]. Wall, what's bitin' you? Stid o' jumpin' for joy 'cause the Master's comin' —

MRS. POLLINGER [*busied with the tray; dryly*]. Jump yourself.

POLLINGER [*angry, brandishing his stick*]. Wall, ain't you glad?

MRS. POLLINGER [*grumbling*]. It's time the Master got some sense, too.

POLLINGER [*with emphasis, proudly*]. Nope. That's where ye don't know the Master. He is n't goin' to be sensible this long time, he's goin' to stay young.

MRS. POLLINGER [*with a scornful glance at him*]. Till the first thing ye know it'll double him up, same as you. Like's two peas.

POLLINGER [*wailing*]. Bring me my shoes.

MRS. POLLINGER [*furious*]. Git 'em yerself. Can't ye see I've got my hands full!

[*Through the centre door, which she slams violently.*]

POLLINGER [*angry*]. Thunder an' lightnin'! Damn these wimmen-folk! Soon's

they think ye're gittin' old, they'd make a nobody of ye. [*Straightens up angrily.*] No, no! Don't git old, whatever ye do. An' ye dassen't give in to old age, either. Must n't act like it, or it'll nab ye in a jiffy. But if ye don't take any notice of it, then it loses confidence an' lets ye alone for a while. No, must n't act like it. [*Tries to step out firmly, and stamps his foot; feeling the pains in his knee again, angrily.*] Ow, gosh a'mighty! [*Voices are heard outside, those of* MRS. POLLINGER *and* HEIN, *laughing and calling.*] Lordy, the Master's here a'ready. [*Hurries to the centre door.*]

HEIN [*invisible, outside*]. Straight ahead, please. This is the way into the palace.

[*He opens the centre door and lets* DELPHINA *enter.*]

DELPHINA [17; *medium height, very slender, her face still quite childlike, which with its little snub nose and the wide-open eyes has a somewhat inquiringly and helplessly wondering expression, which does not wholly agree with her airs of a great lady; short dress of rough dull green wool, and a small Alpine hat; she is heated with walking, stimulated by the wind, illuminated by expectation, and looks curiously about the room; clapping her hands*]. Oh, that is dear! How perfectly dear! How charming!

HEIN [*follows her; without automobile coat, in hunting costume; he is slightly weary from his walk and does not wish to show it; pointing to the left-hand door*]. Now, first of all, go and make yourself comfortable. [*Calling.*] Polly, have him bring up the things right away. [*Seeing* POLLINGER.] Well, Pollinger, old boy! Here we are again.

POLLINGER [*quite touched, grinning*]. Yes, sir, yes, sir! [*Calls, furious.*] My shoes, Polly! Will ye bring me my shoes this instant?

HEIN [*goes up to* DELPHINA, *to left of the table, and takes her tenderly by the hand*]. Well? Do you like it, little one?

DELPHINA [*leans against him*]. Perfectly lovely, Gustav. Everything is so perfectly lovely.

HEIN. Only a bit small, just the two rooms. You know, this is that famous little cottage for two the poets sing about. Then will Your Majesty condescend to remain?

DELPHINA [*with upward cast of infatuated eyes*]. Oh, I wish I might stay here for life. [*Coquettishly.*] If you wish it.

HEIN [*pointing to the left-hand door*]. But now first of all make yourself comfortable.

[A MAID *through the centre door, carrying* HEIN'S *yellow bag, the satchel, the two automobile coats, and their two handbags, goes into the room at left.* POLLINGER *helps the maid and follows her.*]

HEIN [*calling*]. And Polly, the coffee as soon as possible. Show your skill. Don't disgrace me.

MRS. POLLINGER [*outside*]. Leave it to me, sir.

HEIN [*to* DELPHINA]. Everything will be ready in no time. And then you'll make yourself comfortable and have a nice rest, just as if you were at home, and —

DELPHINA [*with a blissful smile*]. Yes.

HEIN [*languishing, softly*]. And then —

[*He looks coquettishly at her.*]

DELPHINA [*shivering; softly, beseechingly*]. Gustav!

[THE MAID *out of the left-hand door to the centre door, and exit.*]

[POLLINGER *from the left-hand door.*]

HEIN. Well, Pollinger, is everything ready?

POLLINGER. Yes, sir.

HEIN [*to* DELPHINA, *pointing*]. You hear, little one. And if you need anything, I'll be waiting here. But take your time, you must be terribly tired, are n't you?

DELPHINA [*going to the door; laughing*]. Oh, not a bit. What from?

HEIN. Well, it's quite a walk up here.

DELPHINA [*already in the doorway*]. Oh, I'd have liked to go on and on indefinitely. To walk with you through the woods! [*Looks tenderly at him; then with a smile.*] Here goes! I'll be right back.

HEIN [*bows ceremoniously and deeply to her, saluting solemnly with both hands*]. Au revoir.

[DELPHINA *smiling, exit left, closes the door.*]

HEIN [*calling after her*]. And take your

time. Don't get yourself tired. [*Comes back to centre and stretches.*] Pollinger, the path has never been so bad.

POLLINGER. Why, sir, that can't be.

HEIN [*lifting his feet*]. Never. Roots and stones, horrible.

POLLINGER. Wall, what d' ye expect, in the woods.

HEIN. No, no. The path used to be better. I hope the coffee comes soon. [*In a different tone, seating himself on a chair to the right of the table, propping his arms comfortably on it, and looking at* POLLINGER; *merrily.*] Well, Pollinger, let's look at you. What did I hear about you? Gout? So Polly says. [*Grimacing.*] Gout? Fie, Pollinger!

POLLINGER. Wall, sir, what ye goin' to do? It's beginnin' sort o' slow like.

HEIN [*suspiciously*]. What is?

POLLINGER [*with a shrug*]. Gittin' old.

HEIN [*indignant*]. Who? [*Reproachfully.*] Pollinger!

POLLINGER. Wall, I can't help it.

HEIN [*much surprised*]. Why, what do you mean? You can't be more than four or five years older than I am.

POLLINGER. Three, sir.

HEIN. Why, then you're no more than a mere child. [*Peevishly.*] Don't let them talk you down, Pollinger. I'll wager your wife's back of this. The women are keen on making us settle down. Remember this, that up to his fiftieth year a man is still in process of development. Not until his fiftieth year, often even later, does he reach his highest mark, and he can maintain himself there for many years more. Only you must n't drink so much, Pollinger.

POLLINGER [*seating himself comfortably to the left of the table*]. Right enough, sir. But if ye're still in process of development, as you say, sir, an' as is surely c'rect, then that 's jist why drinkin's a part of it, 's ye might say, 'cause otherwise, 'cause if ye give up drinkin', that'd be a sign that you yerself think the process of development's prob'ly at an end. An' when ye come to think that, then yer highest mark's in a bad way. That's why, sir. Why does a man do it, 'xcept to have a proof that he's still young?

HEIN [*thoughtfully*]. Well, yes, of course; must n't give up, of course one must n't give up. You're right about that, that would be a mistake, no, one must n't give up. And it's ridiculous, too, Pollinger, a man at your time of life. [*Quite vexed at him.*] I'd never have thought it of you. Look at Polly. How well preserved she is. The women know how.

POLLINGER. Wall, the wimmen don't do as much as we do.

HEIN [*eagerly*]. That's not the reason, on the contrary. The more a man does, the fresher he keeps himself. Look at me. And I certainly don't spare myself. To rest is to rust, says the proverb. I don't rust. Not anywhere. [*Suddenly shouting, almost angry.*] Look at me. I'm not a bit old. And why should I be? Ridiculous! I don't see that at all. [*Suddenly calm again.*] The only thing is, you must n't give in, Pollinger.

POLLINGER. No, sir, no, sir, absolutely not. An' that's just why I think it's cert'nly more sensible not to give it up yet, drinkin' an' spreein'. Might be putty risky.

HEIN [*thoughtfully*]. It may be. [*In a different tone.*] Do you still have that army tobacco?

POLLINGER [*pulls his pouch from his pocket*]. Why, o' course, sir.

HEIN. Give it here. And bring me my pipe.

[POLLINGER *brings a small wooden pipe from the sideboard.*]

HEIN. I'd like to try it once more. It always used to taste so good to me. Much better than that stupid imported stuff in town. [*Sighing, as he looks through the room.*] Oh, you've no idea how well off you are, anyway. While we down there in the city, faugh! [*Lights the pipe and puffs luxuriously.*] We're fools, we folks down there. You can take my word for it. To sit here and know nothing and be at peace! How often I imagine that, how often I long for it. What fools we are. Else I'd never go away from here, but just stay on with you, old Pollinger. What do you say?

POLLINGER [*overjoyed*]. Why, sir, that'd be the greatest happiness we could have!

HEIN [*with an effort, shaking off this mood*]. Later, later. The time will come. Later, some day. Some day when I'm old.

POLLINGER [*laughing*]. Then it's a long way off.

HEIN. Yes. For the moment we've not got that far yet. They won't let me go yet. You just ought to see how they go on with me. You must come to town some time, to one of my concerts — [*recollects himself at that word and has to laugh, with a glance at the left-hand door*] to a real concert. [*Grave again, almost sad.*] No, can't do it yet, they won't let me go. Got to see it through, as long as you're young. [*Laying aside the pipe, which evidently does not taste good to him; screwing up his face.*] Surely that is n't the same tobacco.

POLLINGER. 'T is indeed, sir.

HEIN. It used to taste different.

[*Smoking again.*]

POLLINGER. Maybe because ye're not so used to it any more.

HEIN [*reckoning*]. Let's see, how long is it since I was here last? It must be almost a year.

POLLINGER. A year an' a ha'f, exact. A year an' a ha'f ago, in the fall.

HEIN [*quite astonished, shaking his head*]. A year and a half, this time.

POLLINGER. We'd just had the first snow. The countess was so pleased. Remember, sir?

HEIN [*unpleasantly affected by the recollection of the countess, curtly declining the topic*]. Yes, yes.

POLLINGER. Wall, it's been a long while this time.

HEIN [*spitting, laying aside the pipe*]. That can't possibly be the same tobacco. [*Grimacing.*] Ugh!

POLLINGER [*insisting*]. But cert'nly, sir, the very same.

HEIN [*woefully*]. And it always used to taste so good to me. [*Sniffing.*] Take the pipe away. [*Lights a cigarette.*]

POLLINGER [*shuffles forward to take away the pipe*]. I s'pose a man's taste changes as he gits older.

HEIN [*clicks his tongue angrily; then, looking at* POLLINGER'S *felt slippers*]. What kind of shoes have you got there?

POLLINGER [*embarrassed, vexed*]. I told Polly to bring me my shoes. But she's completely lost her head, she's so tickled. I'll jist see —

[*Starts for door, pipe in hand.*]

HEIN. No, don't. What for? [*Still attentively regarding the slippers, as he crosses his legs and runs his fingers over one shoe.*] Those shoes must be very agreeable.

POLLINGER. Ye see, I feel it in my toes specially, an' then nothin' feels so good as to be able to spread out yer foot good an' soft.

HEIN. It is certainly not healthy to have tight shoes.

POLLINGER. Did n't use to bother me, but as time goes on ye git fussier 'bout everything. [*Has returned the pipe to the sideboard, and shuts it.*] I've got a second pair, by the way. An' if ye'd like —

HEIN [*quickly*]. Yes, bring them.

POLLINGER. Right away.

[*Starts for centre door.*]

HEIN [*rises; quickly*]. And still, wait a minute. [*Takes a few steps toward the left-hand door, looks at it, then turns around again.*] Not now. Tomorrow you can, tomorrow I'll have them [*drawing out the words, thoughtfully*], tomorrow morning. [*In a different tone, quickly.*] Just now I'd rather have you see to getting that coffee here.

MRS. POLLINGER [*puts her head in at the centre door*]. Can I bring in the coffee, sir?

HEIN [*quickly, delighted*]. Why of cour — [*breaks off in the middle of the word and again goes to the left-hand door*] wait a moment. [*Knocks at the door.*]

DELPHINA [*outside, invisible; with a shriek of alarm*]. Don't come in!

HEIN. The coffee is here.

DELPHINA. No, not yet!

HEIN. Will it take long?

DELPHINA. One second.

HEIN. Oh, Lord.

[*Motions to* MRS. POLLINGER *to wait.* MRS. POLLINGER *exit.*]

DELPHINA [*outside, lamenting*]. I can't get my hair up.

HEIN [*with customary gallantry, but without particular gusto*]. Want any help?

[*He leans against the jamb and*

thrusts his hands in his trousers' pockets.]

DELPHINA [*alarmed*]. No! Don't come in! No!

HEIN [*all of this as by custom, almost mechanically, with a bored countenance and a studied tenderness of tone*]. I'd so much like to help. And you'll be surprised how clever I am. May I?

DELPHINA [*horrified, imploring*]. No! For pity's sake, Gustav!

HEIN [*still in an ardent tone and with bored face*]. Just a little. Please, please. I'll close my eyes.

DELPHINA [*shrieking*]. No! No!

HEIN [*all in a simulated tone of sensual excitement*]. Oh, but only just a very little bit.

[*He turns the knob, but stands so that it is easily seen that he does not dream of really going in.*]

DELPHINA [*shrieks, slams the door shut, and throws her weight against it*]. For pity's sake, Gustav, no violence, or I swear to you I will jump out of the window.

HEIN [*yields at once, making no further attempt to enter, and holding his hand firmly on the knob as he whispers excitedly*]. Oh, how cruel! Tantalus, Tantalus! You demand the impossible of me.

DELPHINA [*threatening*]. I'll jump out of the window.

HEIN [*pleading*]. No, no. I'll be obedient. I will strive to hold my throbbing pulse in check. [*Lets go of the knob.*]

DELPHINA [*in a different tone*]. Listen, Gustav.

HEIN. Yes?

DELPHINA. Have n't you a full-length mirror in the house?

HEIN. No, I really forgot.

DELPHINA. Well, it does n't matter, I can get along, I'll be with you in five minutes.

HEIN [*going away from the door, resignedly*]. Now it's only five minutes more. [*To* POLLINGER.] And every time we forget that full-length mirror. Do write to me and remind me of it. [*In a different tone, sternly.*] And I should think you'd learn some time to go out of the room at the proper time. I don't need any witnesses of my passion. [*As* POLLINGER *is going out, calling after him, impatient, irritated.*] And have Polly come along with that coffee. Five minutes! Who knows what that means?

[*Lies down on the sofa and stretches out comfortably.*]

POLLINGER [*exit through the middle door, which he leaves open; calling*]. Polly, the coffee! Don't ye hear, Polly?

MRS. POLLINGER [*calling*]. I'm comin'!

HEIN [*stretching comfortably, a little weary, with a glance at the flowers in the window*]. Eyah! It's nice here. We're fools.

MRS. POLLINGER [*through the middle door, bringing the coffee on a tray*]. Shall I pour it?

[POLLINGER *bringing a tray with glasses, water, and cognac.*]

HEIN. Yes, pour me a cup. And bring it here. From here you have such a pretty view of the treetops.

[POLLINGER *places a chair beside the sofa.* MRS. POLLINGER *has poured a cup and sets it on the chair.*]

HEIN. You don't know, folks, how well off you are here. And spring is peeping in, spring is here again. That's the secret, the spring just entices you every time it comes again.

POLLINGER. That's right, sir. That's what I say myself. When the springtime comes again, a man just can't help himself, it carries him away.

MRS. POLLINGER [*stands by the sofa, waiting for* HEIN *to taste the coffee; to* POLLINGER, *dryly*]. Yes, it carries you away to the tavern.

POLLINGER [*philosophically*]. One this way, the other that way.

MRS. POLLINGER [*reminding*]. Don't ye let the coffee git cold, sir. [*Jesting clumsily.*] O' course ye don't need it, got beauty enough.

HEIN [*has tasted the coffee, looks up sniffing, and nods significantly to* MRS. POLLINGER]. Mmm!

MRS. POLLINGER [*proudly, pleased, with emphasis*]. Don't ye think so?

HEIN [*drinks again; then, comfortably*]. One ought to take a few days —

POLLINGER [*rejoiced, heartily*]. Ah, stay a while, sir.

MRS. POLLINGER [*heartily*]. That's right, do stay a while for once. It's just the prettiest days that's comin' now.

HEIN. I know. Not now. I can't do it now, but one of these days, one of these days I'll really come to stay a while. [*With a sudden inspiration that makes him very happy.*] And I'll tell you what, then I'll come alone.

MRS. POLLINGER [*quickly*]. That 'ud be lovely.

HEIN [*stretching; with yearning*]. A few days up here with you, just all alone, and do nothing but maybe take a little walk in the woods, but mostly just lie here on this nice sofa and have nothing to think about for once and be all alone. [*Sighing.*] Eyah!

DELPHINA [*through the left-hand door; in a morning dress; smiling*]. Here I am.

HEIN [*still buried in thought; carelessly*]. What? [*Now notices* DELPHINA *and recollects quickly.*] Oh, yes, Yes! [*Jumps up, not without an effort, and again assumes his youthful tone; with a glance at her dress, admiringly, as he comes forward.*] Oh, oh! What a poem!

[POLLINGER *at* DELPHINA'S *appearance, exit through centre door.* MRS. POLLINGER *takes time to convey* HEIN'S *cup from chair to table; then exit centre.*]

HEIN [*pointing with one hand to the dress, with the other to the flowers in the window*]. Spring here and spring yonder, who could help being in bliss?

DELPHINA [*with a slighting glance at her dress*]. Oh, this poor rag! [*Sits down at the table.*] Did it take me very long?

HEIN [*fills her cup*]. Horribly.

DELPHINA. Why, I was so quick!

HEIN. You were divinely quick.

DELPHINA. Well, then.

HEIN [*as he sits down on the chair behind the table*]. But to my impatient longing it was an eternity just the same. [*Acting injured.*] Don't you understand that?

DELPHINA [*languishing, softly*]. Don't you think it was to me too?

HEIN [*snatches at her hand in artificial passion, in a tone of voluptuous outburst*]. Oh, you, you!

DELPHINA [*quickly withdraws her hand, cowering, and then says, with a slightly repelling gesture of both hands, smiling, coquettish*]. First the coffee!

HEIN [*with an impatient movement*]. Oh! But I always thought so.

DELPHINA. What?

HEIN. Your nature is cold, through and through.

DELPHINA [*laying her hand on her heart; with pained reproach*]. I? Oh, Gustav!

HEIN [*still injured*]. Why, any one can see it. And remember: in the car a while ago.

DELPHINA [*indignant, with abhorrence*]. In the car! Fie!

HEIN. True passion pays no heed to that.

DELPHINA [*in a pleading tone, softly*]. And you must remember, Gustav: it is the first time.

HEIN [*drinking coffee; carelessly*]. Really?

DELPHINA [*deeply wounded*]. Gustav! [*Begins to cry a little.*] Oh, Gustav, if you could think —

HEIN [*to pacify her; lightly*]. No, no, certainly not.

DELPHINA [*has immediately ceased to cry, solemnly asseverating*]. You are truly the only man in the whole world — !

HEIN [*agreeing carelessly, as if that were a matter of course*]. Yes, of course.

DELPHINA [*solemnly*]. I can swear that to you.

HEIN. Why, I know it, child. Do you suppose, that if I did n't have the feeling —

DELPHINA. Oh, yes, you have that feeling, have n't you?

HEIN. For believe me, nothing has ever been more contemptible to me than when it was not the call of the heart that compels two souls irresistibly together. The call of the heart must sanctify it and — [*breaks off, bored; again drinking coffee, falling out of his rôle, carelessly*] and so on, you understand me?

DELPHINA [*touched*]. I understand you. [*Casting up her eyes.*] And if you feel it that way, Gustav —

HEIN [*in careless confirmation*]. Yes. Of

course. Only I am not the man to use big words.

DELPHINA [*smiling happily*]. I have always understood you right away, without a word.

HEIN [*drinking coffee*]. So it should be.

[*There is a loud knock at the centre door.* DELPHINA *utters a brief cry of fear and half rises.*]

HEIN [*startled, vexed, shouting*]. What is it? Come in! [*Forces her down into her chair again; smiling.*] No fear, child. No one that knows you will come up here.

POLLINGER [*through the centre door, bringing a large round cake; purposely looking away from them, so as to be sure to see nothing*]. We forgot the cake.

[*Puts it on the table; then exit centre.*]

HEIN [*delighted, very animatedly*]. Oh yes. Give it here. I knew I was missing something all the time. [*Cuts the cake and gives* DELPHINA *a piece; merrily.*] Is n't it really very nice here? Speak up. Or are you perhaps sorry?

DELPHINA [*smiling*]. I hope I shall not be sorry.

HEIN [*in excellent humor*]. And when I think that I really ought to be sitting down yonder, banging the box, with those horrible women [*shakes himself with horror*], brrr!

DELPHINA [*with faint doubt, suspiciously*]. Are they so very horrible to you?

HEIN. Unspeakably!

DELPHINA. But then you dissemble well. For, Gustav, you're terribly flirty with all of them.

HEIN [*surprised*]. I?

DELPHINA. Every one thinks you are in love with her.

HEIN. Gracious, that's a part of it. With the competition nowadays. My profession, child! Duty!

DELPHINA [*coquettishly*]. If it only is n't duty in my case —

HEIN [*merrily*]. No, child, that far my zeal for duty does not carry me. These with you are what you might call extra lessons.

DELPHINA [*with coquettish pain*]. How many extra lessons have you already given, I wonder?

HEIN. Dear me, people exaggerate terribly. Just like the tax-collector: if you are n't an absolute beggar, he makes you out a millionaire.

DELPHINA. But you're no beggar, at any rate.

HEIN. Well, no! [*Vexed and irritated.*] Now don't begin that sort of thing. Always the same old song, all women are alike in that. [*Calmer; transition to jollity.*] Well, what should I have done? We've only known each other for six weeks. I could n't know that one day Mrs. Delphina Jura was suddenly going to appear. If you had come twenty years ago!

DELPHINA. Why, I was n't on the earth at all then.

HEIN. Well, you see! Then that's your fault. And so in the meantime I have tried to make myself useful in other quarters.

DELPHINA [*coquettish*]. But if I had come twenty years ago?

HEIN. Then I should certainly have become the faithfullest man that has ever lived. I feel that. But as it is, that position has remained unfilled, thanks to you. Are you satisfied now?

DELPHINA [*pouting*]. Oh, Gustav, you're making fun of me.

HEIN. Not in the least.

DELPHINA. Can't you imagine, how terrible it is for me — [*looking through the room.*] I keep thinking: how many women have been here with you?

HEIN. Well, after all, I can't have a whole collection of cabins.

DELPHINA. And at every speech I think: how many women have you said that to?

HEIN. Ah, child, you take me to be terribly unoriginal. [*In a different tone, taking her hand, again making an effort to be tender.*] Dear little Delly! Look at me Right in the eye. [*Tilts up her head by the chin.*] Are you really so stupid? Can't you tell that these words have never before been spoken, but are now being dictated by my heart, just for you alone?

DELPHINA [*blissfully, with closed eyes*]. Yes, Gustav? Yes?

HEIN [*draws her to him, her head in his hands.*] Dear silly child, beloved child.

[*Kisses her.*]

DELPHINA [*without resisting*]. Don't, Gustav. I implore you.

HEIN [*releases her again at once and steps away from her*]. Forgive me, I could not resist. [*Puts his hand over his eyes and stands a moment, as if struggling for air; then, withdrawing his hand from his eyes, smiling, as he sits down again.*] Now I'm good again.

DELPHINA [*has remained for a moment expectantly in her yielding posture, then she slowly sits up again in some confusion and says softly*]. I thank you for being so considerate. You feel how terrible it is for a modest woman. [*Suddenly jumps up and shakes herself; excitedly, with hot voice, quickly.*] But now come, come! Please come!

HEIN [*getting up slowly, startled*]. Where to?

DELPHINA. I can't stand it any more, Gustav!

HEIN. But child!

DELPHINA. I want to go out, away, into the forest, be a dear and come with me. I can't stand it here any more.

HEIN [*relieved, reassured*]. Oh.

DELPHINA [*almost swaying with excitement*]. Outside it's so wonderfully beautiful, and everything's in bloom, and the birds are singing. I can't sit here in the room, I want to go racing through the woods, just go racing, deeper and deeper into the woods, for hours and hours, till the night comes. Do come, Gustav, come with me, it's so perfectly lovely, just to walk with you in the bright springtime deep into the woods! Come, Gustav, come!

[*Seizes him by both hands, to drag him away.*]

HEIN [*who seems to have no particular liking for it; hesitating*]. I don't just know whether that's advisable, do you think it is? Won't you get too tired? You're not accustomed to it.

DELPHINA [*shaking herself, laughing*]. Tired! What are you thinking of? I could run to the end of the world. Oh come, do come. — We'll climb way up somewhere and sit down where you can look far out over the land, and we won't leave until the night has fallen, and it will be all dark and I shall be so deliciously afraid, and then you'll take me in your strong arms and carry me away, wherever you will, and I shall know nothing more, and be wholly yours, and feel nothing more but just you alone. [*Sinks on his breast.*]

HEIN [*to whom this outburst is inconvenient*]. Child, child, wake up. What is the matter with you? What is it?

DELPHINA [*resting on his breast, with closed eyes, smiling, softly*]. Love is the matter, and it is beautiful.

HEIN [*concerned*]. And in any case you would have to change your clothes first. When the sun goes down, it's bitterly cold up here, it's the easiest thing to catch cold. I really don't know whether it would n't be wiser —

DELPHINA [*freeing herself from him and stamping defiantly*]. No, no, no! If I want to? [*Merrily.*] And I do want to, I want to, and when I want something I have to have it. [*Again takes him by the hand, to draw him out.*] So you'd better come right away, it's no use, come along now, come; good gracious, what a man! [*Tries to pull him toward the centre door. There is a loud knocking at the door. She drops* HEIN'S *hand in terror and recoils, involuntarily taking the direction of the left-hand door.*] For mercy's sake!

HEIN [*also startled by the violent knocking; furious, shouting toward the centre door*]. What *is* the matter now? [*To* DELPHINA, *crossly.*] Don't be childish. Who should come up here — ? [*Again speaking toward the door.*] Well, what is it?

POLLINGER [*at the door; he merely puts his head in*]. Sir!

HEIN [*impatiently*]. Well?

POLLINGER. A gentleman, sir.

[DELPHINA *goes to the left doorway.*]

HEIN [*who cannot believe it*]. How so? Who is it? Not here, surely?

POLLINGER. A gentleman from town.

JURA [*outside, still invisible, calling*]. My name is Jura.

[DELPHINA *with a brief shriek, flees into the other room; exit.*]

HEIN [*involuntarily places himself so as to keep his back turned to the left-hand door; vehemently, loudly*]. Well, tell the gentleman —

JURA [*shoves* POLLINGER *aside and enters; with a very cheerful countenance*]. What is it? It's simpler for you to tell me, is n't it? [*To* POLLINGER.] Go, my good man. You can go.

[HEIN *angrily motions* POLLINGER *out.* POLLINGER *exit centre and closes the door.*]

JURA [*looking through the room*]. My, but you really have a charming place here.

HEIN [*has recovered his composure and assumes a very haughty, condescending air; hesitatingly, gropingly, as it were, as if he could not quite recollect*]. Mr. Jura, Jura?

JURA [*looking quietly at him*]. Yes, yes. The husband of the woman. — But where is my wife?

HEIN [*calmly, wondering*]. Your wife? Did n't your wife come with you? [*With a gesture of starting for the centre door.*] Then she must still be outside.

JURA [*laughs; easily*]. No, no. She's been here for some time. [*Points to the left-hand door; curiously.*] Is she there? [*Cordially.*] Don't let's torture her. It must be most uncomfortable for her, in there.

[*Starts for the left-hand door.*]

HEIN [*blocks his way; he now wishes to provoke a quarrel, in a haughty, insulting tone*]. I cannot but find your conduct at least very strange, my dear sir. Most strange, on my word. We hardly know each other, and I really don't know —

JURA [*remains much amused; nodding*]. Yes, we hardly know each other, but [*laughing*], but that did n't embarrass you when you took my wife away from me —

HEIN [*flaring up*]. Sir!

JURA [*calmly completing his sentence*]. Whereby after all a certain connection has been established between us. Don't you think?

HEIN [*in an intentionally insulting tone, vehemently*]. Sir, I really do not know what you want.

JURA [*amicably*]. Why, that's just what I'm going to tell you. [*Beseeching.*] But please call my wife. What foolishness! Why should I rehearse the same story first to you and then to her; that would be too stupid. A man's time is really worth something better.

HEIN [*with great reserve, curtly*]. I repeat to you that I absolutely do not understand what you are driving at, there must be some misunderstanding, wholly incomprehensible to me, and of course I could simply [*he makes a gesture of showing* JURA *the door*], but I am in any case, if that will satisfy you, quite ready to —

JURA [*calling a halt*]. Word of honor, I know, I know, of course. But let's not waste time with formalities. Why won't you rather go and get my wife at once?

HEIN [*roaring*]. But when you hear that I —

JURA [*holding his ears*]. I hear.

HEIN [*roaring*]. I have n't the slightest desire to let you make a fool of me any longer.

JURA. But why do you get so excited? I have n't done anything to you, it's the other way around.

HEIN. And you will simply force me to throw you out on the spot.

JURA. You think so? [*Looks at him searchingly from the side.*] I don't believe you are a bit stronger. I only look so.

[*Shoves his sleeve back and feels his muscles.*]

HEIN [*curtly, full of contempt*]. It is simply silly, the way you conduct yourself.

JURA [*with laughing eyes*]. Aha! How you'd like to insult me?

[*Laughs cheerfully at him.*]

HEIN [*very glad to have brought the conversation to that point; challengingly, scornfully, shrugging his shoulders*]. If it insults you, then by all means —

JURA [*adopting his tone, completing his sentence, quickly*]. You are at my disposal.

HEIN [*repeating, challengingly*]. I am at your disposal.

JURA [*laughing, easily*]. But I am not. No, you will not succeed. You cannot insult me.

HEIN [*picking up this word, to be insulted by it; shouting*]. I cannot insult you? What do you mean by saying I cannot insult you? You are becoming insolent.

JURA [*wishing to explain that he has misunderstood*]. But —

HEIN [*growing more vehement, louder*]. What do you mean? I must beg for an ex-

planation of your meaning. Why can I not insult you? What can you advance against me? Why?

JURA [*explaining*]. Why, I only mean that I don't let myself be insulted, never.

HEIN [*louder*]. Well, if you won't let yourself be insulted, then defend yourself at least! [*Roaring.*] For I am insulting you!

JURA [*involuntarily raising his own voice; very quickly*]. Oh, no, you are not insulting me.

HEIN [*very quickly*]. Why, I've been insulting you all this time.

JURA [*very quickly*]. No, you're not insulting me at all.

HEIN [*beside himself, very quickly*]. Well, what more do you want? Shall I thrash you?

JURA [*very quickly*]. No! — [*Looks wonderingly at him; then naïvely.*] Why should you?

HEIN [*roaring*]. You surely must have some sort of a feeling of honor in you!

JURA [*very decidedly, but very quietly*]. No! Certainly not. But if I had, would that be a reason for thrashing me?

HEIN [*roaring*]. Well, then what do you want of me?

JURA [*very quietly*]. Well, you don't let me speak.

HEIN [*roaring*]. Speak then, and end this.

JURA [*quietly, pleading*]. But first do go and get my wife.

HEIN [*roaring*]. I have already told you —

JURA [*quietly, pleading*]. So you really won't go and get my wife?

HEIN [*controls himself; quietly, sharply, decisively*]. I have told you that your wife is not here. I have no idea how you could hit upon that idea. I repeat to you again, that it must be a misunderstanding which is wholly incomprehensible to me. And I give you once more my word of honor —

JURA. Now there! Don't you see she is here.

HEIN [*roaring*]. If I give you my word of honor —

JURA [*quickly, eagerly*]. One only gives his word of honor when it's necessary. Otherwise there would n't be any object in it.

HEIN [*parrying; eagerly*]. If you do not believe my word of honor —

JURA [*with eager assurance*]. Oh, but I do. I counted on it.

HEIN [*ending his sentence*]. Then we two have nothing more to say to each other.

[*Turns his back on him and walks up and down the room in front of the table.*]

JURA [*looks after him, then steps forward from behind the table into the centre; resignedly*]. Very well, then. If you wish. So then my wife is not here.

HEIN [*pacing up and down; curtly*]. No.

JURA. I must admit that this causes me no little embarrassment. I am sorry.

HEIN [*pacing up and down, impatient, irritated*]. Well, do you wish to find your wife here?

JURA. Yes. For it would be so much easier to talk. And human life is so short.

HEIN [*pacing up and down; impatiently*]. I don't know what else we should have to say to each other.

JURA [*cheerfully*]. Oh, very much. It's only just beginning now. You will be surprised. [*Going to the centre door.*] Just be patient. [*He opens the door and calls through it.*] Marie dear, please come in.

MARIE [*outside, invisible*]. Yes, Frank. [*She enters in tourist costume; nodding amicably to* HEIN.] Good evening, Gus.

HEIN [*coming to a stand before the table; taken aback*]. Marie! Why, what — ?

JURA. Please be seated, Marie.

[*Offers her a chair to the left of the table.*]

DELPHINA [*from the left-hand door; furious, rushing at* JURA]. What do you mean by calling this woman by her first name?

HEIN [*stamping his foot angrily; to* DELPHINA]. What are you thinking of, how can you — ?

DELPHINA [*almost crying with anger; to* HEIN]. Let me be. I'm certainly not going to sit by and listen to my husband calling a strange woman —

[MARIE *has seated herself, and looks at* DELPHINA *with a smile of quiet amusement.*]

JURA [*very quiet and very friendly toward all*]. Right away, Delly. You shall know everything. But be seated. [*To* HEIN.] Excuse me if force of habit makes me continue to call my first wife Delly.

DELPHINA [*with a quick outcry*]. Frank!

JURA. Right away, Delly. One thing at a time. But have a seat. [*As* DELPHINA *is about to sit down beside* MARIE; *pointing to the chair opposite* MARIE, *on the right of the table.*] No, you had better sit there, please. [*With a glance at the two ladies.*] One can never tell, and a large table between is certainly better. [*To* HEIN.] And won't you have a seat too?

HEIN [*declining curtly, ironically*]. You are *too* kind. [*Steps behind* DELPHINA'S *chair, stands with arms crossed, and keeps looking at* MARIE; *curtly, to* JURA.] Now will you tell us what all this means?

JURA. Right away. [*Sits down behind the table.*] It won't take long at all. All we want is to put things in order here.

HEIN [*suddenly angry*]. Marie, that you —

MARIE. Please, listen to him first, Gus. He is right.

JURA. That's just it, he won't listen to me. It might have all been settled this long time.

HEIN [*bitter, urging*]. Well?

JURA. May I first allow myself a few questions? And first of all I want to ask you, Delly; tell me —

DELPHINA [*with pinched voice*]. What?

JURA. Tell me: do you love this man?

[DELPHINA *quivers and bends her head.*]

HEIN [*piqued*]. How do you come to — ?

JURA. One may ask, I suppose? She can say so. It's no disgrace.

MARIE [*in a mild tone*]. We just want to know.

HEIN [*piqued*]. What is it to you, anyway?

MARIE [*half excusing*]. Well, it is something to me, after all.

JURA. One thing at a time, please. Speak, Delly: you do love this man?

[DELPHINA *is silent.*]

JURA [*after a slight pause*]. For I cannot imagine that you are spending your days with a man, or in the dwelling of a man, without —

HEIN [*interrupting, wishing to make some objection*]. Sir, permit —

JURA [*with lively asseveration; naïvely*]. But I *am* permitting!

HEIN [*vehemently*]. What I mean is —

JURA. But let her answer, won't you?

HEIN [*to* DELPHINA, *imperiously, curtly*]. Answer!

JURA. No, you must n't intimidate her. Let her tell the truth quite frankly. — Be perfectly easy. If perhaps the fact is that in the last analysis you don't love him at all, but have simply been entertaining yourself with him —

HEIN [*furious*]. Mr. Jura, now —

JURA [*interrupting, very decidedly*]. Mr. Hein, now —

MARIE [*interrupting*]. But people, now — now let her finally have her say.

JURA [*quietly agreeing*]. Yes.

HEIN [*piqued, urgently*]. All right, then!

JURA [*to* DELPHINA, *quietly*]. So reflect and tell us, you need have no fear whatever. And I assure you in advance, we shall be content in any case.

DELPHINA [*starting up, piqued, vehemently*]. Oh? You are content?

JURA [*wondering*]. Well, why should n't I be?

DELPHINA [*angry*]. You are content if I love another man? So long as I know that! Oh, if you are content!

JURA. But child, whether I am or not, what shall I do about it? I can't change it any more than you, if you love him.

DELPHINA [*defiantly, challengingly*]. And I do love him, I love him.

HEIN [*corroborating*]. She loves me. Of course.

JURA [*to* HEIN, *to show him that he has no need to get excited*]. I have not doubted it in the least. [*Then, rising; looking at* HEIN.] And you?

HEIN. I? I also have not doubted it.

JURA. No, I know that, but whether you love her too?

HEIN [*vehemently*]. That's no business of anybody in the world.

JURA [*quietly, but decidedly*]. Excuse me, it's very much the business of all three of us.

HEIN [*furious*]. I can love whom I will. Nobody on earth has the power or the right to forbid me.

JURA. You can, indeed. And in fact it pleases me very much that you —

HEIN [*more and more irritated*]. Sir, whether I please you or not —

JURA [*interrupting*]. It pleases me very much that you —

HEIN [*roaring*]. I will not please you.

JURA [*also shouting*]. But you do! You cannot forbid me.

MARIE [*conciliating*]. After all, that does n't matter so very much.

JURA [*already quieted*]. No. You are right. And all I meant was that if you have the courage to follow your heart unconcernedly — then why won't you have the courage to confess it with the same unconcern?

HEIN [*piqued*]. Courage, courage! Much courage about that. You doubt my courage?

JURA. Not at all. And it really would n't be at all kind of you to leave my wife in the lurch now. So why not say that you love her.

DELPHINA [*looks anxiously at* HEIN, *softly*]. Gustav!

MARIE [*quietly*]. Gustav, you really need not consider me. It is very dear of you, but quite unnecessary, I assure you. And you're not usually like this.

HEIN [*more and more irritated*]. What ails you all? You're fairly driving me to it.

JURA [*comfortably*]. Then say it, do! Why will you still deny it?

HEIN [*furious*]. I'm not denying anything. [*Roaring.*] Well, of course I love her.

JURA [*relieved*]. Well, at last!

MARIE [*relieved*]. Well, at last!

JURA. And now tell me one more thing, and then we'll be done in a jiffy. I'd just like to know how long you think, approximately, it is going to last.

HEIN [*shouting*]. Sir, are you mad?

JURA [*with unshaken calm; to* DELPHINA]. In your case I suppose I may assume that it is for ever?

DELPHINA [*embittered, defiant*]. Yes, you can.

JURA. And you, sir?

HEIN [*embittered*]. Have you perhaps brought a notary along, to take a record of it?

JURA. Your word is sufficient.

HEIN. I am not accustomed to measure my feelings with a yardstick.

JURA. Yet you must have formed a certain opinion about it?

HEIN. No.

JURA. You love my wife. But before her you have loved others?

HEIN [*roaring*]. Yes.

JURA. Then you should be able to figure up about how long it usually lasts with you.

HEIN [*roaring*]. No.

JURA. That surprises me. With your experience I should be able to figure it.

HEIN [*shortly*]. Not I. I love Delphina today. Whether I shall still love her tomorrow, I do not yet know.

JURA. But that will hardly satisfy her.

DELPHINA [*defiantly, proudly*]. It does satisfy me. For I know it.

JURA [*warning, slowly, with admonishing finger*]. Now, Delly, think well upon it.

DELPHINA [*sullenly*]. I love him and shall always love him, and I ask nothing else. [*With a scornful outburst.*] You love Mrs. Marie, too. So you must know how it is.

JURA. Just be patient. That will come later. One thing at a time. [*Rubbing his hands.*] So point number one is settled. You love my wife, and my wife loves you. And now see how well this fits. For just imagine. I love your wife, and your wife loves me. [*Shoves his crossed arms on the table, and leans forward.*] How fortunate we four people are. So you see we can celebrate our marriage right now on this very day.

[*Looks around the table with a laugh of pleasure.*]

HEIN [*suddenly very calm, as he begins to suspect that all this is merely a prearranged game*]. You have a sense of humor. For you surely cannot seriously imagine that an affair of such importance —

JURA [*breaking in*]. Nothing is important but one's feeling.

HEIN [*quickly, impatiently*]. But at least it needs to be thought over.

JURA. You should really have thought it over beforehand [*pointing his finger at* DELPHINA], beforehand! However, as you will. I am quite ready to discuss the matter with you again in the most thorough manner, tomorrow or any time. I have time and can stay here as long as you like; please dispose of my time as you will. In the main, of course, we are already at one. And that makes me very glad. [*With a sudden idea, as if recollecting, as he rises and goes to* MARIE.] Yes and, and now only do I consider myself justified, dear Marie, in giving you the first kiss. How much nicer it is, when one can do it with a good conscience.

[*He takes her head in his hands and kisses her on the mouth.* DELPHINA, *as* JURA *kisses* MARIE, *starts up from her chair and turns away so vehemently as to bump into* HEIN, *standing behind her.*]

HEIN [*recoiling; startled*]. What's the matter with you?

DELPHINA [*vehemently, almost weeping with rage, softly*]. Why don't you kiss me?

[*About to sink on his breast.*]

HEIN [*declining, shortly*]. Don't. [*Going away from her toward the centre door; aloud.*] I don't think it's in very good taste to make a public show of such things.

JURA [MARIE'S *head still in his hands, half turning to* HEIN]. But as soon as a relation once takes on a connubial color, this is really a part of it, don't you think?

HEIN [*indifferently*]. Don't mind me. [*Calling at the door.*] Pollinger.

MARIE. What do you want?

HEIN [*pacing up and down the room; shortly, dryly*]. Light. It's getting dark, you can hardly see any more, and first thing you know we might be getting our wives mixed up.

MARIE. Yes, and some one must tell Pollinger to set up another bed here. Somebody can sleep on the sofa.

JURA [*much amused*]. Ah, there are only these two rooms here?

MARIE. Yes, there are only these two rooms here. Heretofore they have always been ample.

[POLLINGER *enters at centre.*]

HEIN [*to* POLLINGER]. The lamp.

[POLLINGER *mounts the chair behind the table and lights the lamp.*]

HEIN [*pointing to the table*]. And clear that away. And tell Polly that there will be four to supper. And then, we need something else to sleep on. I suppose you have something?

POLLINGER [*has lighted the lamp and is clearing away the dishes*]. Must be 'n old army cot in the cellar. Right away, sir.

[*Exit centre with the dishes.*]

HEIN [*in very ill humor at the thought of having to sleep on the cot*]. Who's to sleep on the cot?

MARIE. We must divide up, anyway.

HEIN [*piqued*]. I'm curious.

JURA. If there are only two rooms, then it can only be done either by having the two married couples sleep together —

HEIN [*impatient, irritated*]. You have a tendency to jest about everything!

JURA. Well, is that a jest, for goodness sake?

HEIN [*impatient*]. Well, go on, go on.

JURA [*continuing*]. And so if by couples, then we should still have to decide which ones, that is, whether the former —

DELPHINA [*vehemently protesting, full of hate*]. No!

JURA [*with a shrug*]. Or the present ones.

HEIN [*impatient, vexed*]. No, no! What nonsense.

JURA. Well, then the only other thing —

MARIE. And that will be the wisest. The two gentlemen will sleep together, and we two also. [*Stands up and takes one step in front of the table toward* DELPHINA, *really only an offer to meet her halfway; smiling.*] We shall get along peacefully. Shan't we, Mrs. Delphina? And we too must finally get to know each other a little.

DELPHINA [*advances involuntarily toward* MARIE, *in front of the table, much excited and confused*]. I? We? Of course, that is, but — [*begins to cry, is ashamed, and runs*

past MARIE *to the left-hand door.*] Excuse me.

[*Exit through the door, which she slams behind her.*]

JURA [*has meanwhile gone around the table toward the right and* HEIN*; amused*]. We hardly need to become acquainted now. We've already become quite intimate, I think.

[*Laughs heartily, rubbing his hands and looking amusedly at* HEIN. MARIE *looks after* DELPHINA *with a smile, then with a shrug goes slowly to the sideboard and opens it, to inspect the contents.*]

HEIN [*observing* JURA*; with his previous suspicion*]. You have a sense of humor.

JURA [*significantly*]. Sometimes that is a piece of great fortune, Mr. Hein.

HEIN [*significantly, slowly, half in question*]. I hope you have a sense of humor.

JURA [*understands him; evading, smiling*]. Well, you must n't overestimate my sense of humor, either. [*Laughs.*] But we shall certainly understand each other in time very well. You please me more and more.

HEIN [*half laughing, half vexed*]. Do you perhaps love me too? For you are very, very versatile in your emotions, versatile and generous.

JURA [*beaming with pleasure, eagerly agreeing*]. Yes. For really I am in love with all human beings. It does n't matter who they are.

HEIN [*with a shake of the head*]. You are a singular person.

JURA [*modestly declining*]. I am merely young. That is all, Mr. Hein.

HEIN [*suddenly very serious, almost a trifle sad*]. Yes, that may be.

MARIE [*discovering in the sideboard an old set of quaint chessmen; much delighted*]. Oh, here is still the old game of chess, with the dear funny pieces. Look.

[*Puts it on the table.*]

JURA [*eagerly, curiously*]. Chess?

[*Quickly advances to the table and helps* MARIE *to set up the pieces.*]

HEIN [*delighted*]. Is that still here? I did n't know that. [*Goes to the table.*]

JURA [*laughing*]. The fat queen is really lovely.

HEIN [*to* JURA*, with sympathy*]. You play chess?

JURA. Passionately.

HEIN [*pleased*]. Oh.

JURA. And it is excellent training for life, because it teaches you that reason can do anything.

MARIE [*has seated herself on the left-hand chair and is about to begin*]. Now whom am I playing?

JURA [*to* HEIN]. You.

HEIN [*to* JURA]. No, you.

JURA [*stepping behind* MARIE'S *chair*]. No, no, I like to look on.

HEIN [*sits on the chair behind the table; merry*]. You're forever leaguing yourselves against me. [*Lights a cigarette.*] Well, we'll see! Ready?

MARIE [*solemnly*]. Begin!

HEIN. Yes, you began yesterday.

[*Makes the first move.* MARIE *makes her first move.*]

JURA [*at* HEIN'S *first move; nodding eagerly*]. Aha!

[DELPHINA *through the left-hand door; looks with surprise at the players; as she is not noticed at all by them, she goes slowly to the window at right and seats herself there on the upholstered chair, looking out.*]

HEIN [*making another move*]. Yes indeed, my dear Marie, we understand each other very well.

[*The first moves are made very rapidly.*]

JURA [*looking on contentedly, nodding*]. The Spanish opening. The game of Master Rui Lopez de Segura! [*To* HEIN.] You just wait.

HEIN [*playing*]. No, no! Keep your pawn. I know that trap.

JURA [*admiring* HEIN'S *play*]. With true artists it's really only the hand that plays, they're so thoroughly in practice.

HEIN [*playing, carelessly*]. Yes, one leaves it to his hand.

[DELPHINA *sits at the window, looking out; now she looks up at the players, who do not observe*

her, and suddenly rises, feeling her abandonment, to open the window; the window rattles.]

HEIN [*looking up from the game at the sound*]. What's the matter? [*Only now observing* DELPHINA; *carelessly.*] Oh, you're there. [*Makes another move.*]

DELPHINA [*to* HEIN]. I'm only opening the window.

[*She stands at the open window and looks out into the dark forest.*]

HEIN [*playing, answering absently*]. Yes.

JURA [*delighted at a move by* MARIE, *eagerly*]. Excellent. [*Laughing at* HEIN.] Well, what now?

[*Looks at* HEIN *with tense anticipation; leaning over the table.* MARIE *looks intently at* HEIN, *awaiting his move.*]

DELPHINA [*standing at the window, looking out*]. Now it's quite dark and the woods are rustling; the night is veiling everything.

HEIN [*thinking about the move he is to make; toward* DELPHINA, *mechanically, absently*]. Well — that's what you wanted. Is n't it?

[*Seizes his knight and holds it aloft, still hesitating.*]

DELPHINA [*looks toward the players and says sadly, thoughtfully lowering her head, softly*]. Yes.

CURTAIN

THIRD ACT

The same room as in the second act. Only now there is a narrow army cot leaning in the left-hand corner beside the sideboard, already folded up. Early morning, beautiful day, bright sunlight.

MARIE [*in the chair to the left of the table, breakfasting; covers are laid for four*]. But Mrs. Pollinger. I simply don't understand you.

MRS. POLLINGER [*standing behind the table, lamenting*]. Wall, don't it make ye feel bad when a man won't hear reason at all?

MARIE [*amused*]. Oh, good gracious, these men.

MRS. POLLINGER. At first ye keep sayin' to yerself: Wall, wait till he's got a little bit older. An' then when it gits to that, it's worse 'n ever.

MARIE. Well, have n't you ever noticed — ?

MRS. POLLINGER. What?

MARIE. You know men never do get any older.

MRS. POLLINGER [*wondering*]. Ye don't say.

MARIE [*laughing*]. No.

MRS. POLLINGER [*quickly*]. Wall, for the land's sake don't ye tell my husban' that. Ef he hears that! They's on'y one good thing about it, he's so 'fraid o' gittin' old.

MARIE. No, men don't get any older, they get younger all the time, Mrs. Pollinger. Until at last, some a little earlier, some a little later, along about the middle of the forties, they're like children again. Yes, Mrs. Pollinger, our children. You must steer your course by that, and when once you've become used to it, it's all right.

MRS. POLLINGER [*lamenting*]. Ef he could on'y leave his cursed drinkin' alone. Drinkin' an' spreein'. But no!

MARIE. Some have this, and some have that, but none of them can give it up.

MRS. POLLINGER. An' it gits worse every year.

MARIE [*agreeing, confirming*]. It gets worse every year. And therefore, Mrs. Pollinger —

MRS. POLLINGER [*listening greedily*]. Yes?

MARIE. Therefore it's necessary for the woman to become wiser every year.

MRS. POLLINGER [*agreeing thoughtfully*]. That's true, true o' course. But ef a man 'ud on'y give ye credit for it, at least.

MARIE. That is true. But they won't give us credit.

DELPHINA [*comes through the left-hand door; bowing, embarrassed; softly*]. Good morning.

MARIE. Good morning. [*Looks at* DELPHINA *smiling.*] Well, did you sleep your fill? The men have been out this long time.

MRS. POLLINGER [*curtseying to* DELPHINA, *as she prepares to reach for the coffee-pot*]. May I fill your cup?

DELPHINA [*sits down on the chair in front of the table; nodding*]. Please. I am hungry. [*Embarrassed.*] I'm used to having breakfast in bed.

MRS. POLLINGER *has filled the cup, suddenly recollecting*]. Mercy, an' I forgot all about the honey. [*Goes to the centre door.*] Would n't the Master be in a fine rage.

MARIE. Why, has n't he had breakfast yet?

MRS. POLLINGER [*going out*]. No.

[*Exit centre.*]

DELPHINA [*putting up her hair; unhappy*]. Oh dear, and this combing my hair, all alone.

MARIE [*sweetly*]. Why did n't you call me?

DELPHINA [*delighted, surprised*]. Yes? Would you have?

MARIE [*smiling*]. Gladly.

DELPHINA [*quickly*]. Thank you very much.

[*Is embarrassed and quickly takes her spoon to begin to breakfast.*]

MARIE [*stretching out her hand toward her; in a warning tone*]. But — !

DELPHINA [*obediently*]. Yes?

MARIE. May I give you a bit of advice?

DELPHINA. Please do.

MARIE. I would advise you to wait breakfast until my hus — [*correcting herself*] until Gustav comes back.

DELPHINA [*disappointed, meekly*]. You would?

MARIE. He is used to that. He does n't like it at all to breakfast alone.

DELPHINA [*looking wonderingly at* MARIE, *who is breakfasting with enjoyment; in an almost envious tone*]. But how about you?

MARIE [*as if she did not understand the question*]. I?

DELPHINA [*enviously*]. You're having yours now.

MARIE [*as if just comprehending*]. Oh, that! [*Laughing.*] Why, I don't need to wait for him. Not any more.

DELPHINA [*uneasy*]. Yes, that's so.

MARIE. But he might take it very ill of you. And justly. For we must observe the habits of the man we love. For that reason, if you wish, I will gladly call your attention to everything and initiate you into every thing. For you simply cannot imagine how terribly touchy he is.

DELPHINA [*uneasy*]. Oh! I shall be very grateful to you.

[*Gets up and goes toward the right.*]

MARIE. What is the matter? Won't you stay with me for a little while?

DELPHINA [*dejected*]. I only want to sit a little farther away. You know, the smell of the coffee — [*Sits down on the chair by the window, at right, sadly.*] For I'm really used to having my breakfast in bed.

MARIE [*severely*]. No, he does n't like that at all, not at all!

DELPHINA [*more to herself, to give herself courage*]. I can manage that.

MARIE [*after a slight pause, in which she observes* DELPHINA *with amusement; in a different tone; carelessly*]. Did you sleep well?

DELPHINA [*quite dejected*]. Oh yes, thank you.

MARIE [*softly*]. I woke up once, and it seemed as if you were crying to yourself.

DELPHINA [*lowers her head, flushing; embarrassed*]. Oh, I often cry in my sleep. [*Involuntarily confessing.*] And I was afraid. It's all so strange.

MARIE [*carelessly*]. It's easily understood, you had probably imagined it would be different.

DELPHINA [*softly*]. And I was so terribly sorry for Frank.

MARIE [*feigning surprise*]. For Frank? Why? We shall be very happy together.

DELPHINA [*with an outburst*]. I never would have thought it of him. [*Rises and goes to the table.*] Not one year after our marriage! Men are so bad. [*Angrily.*] I don't want to have anything more to do with any man.

[*Takes a roll and bites into it.*]

MARIE. One always thinks that.

MRS. POLLINGER [*with the honey, through the centre door*]. There. Now ev'rthing's ready.

MARIE. When did the Master go out?

MRS. POLLINGER. Right after sunup. [*With a glance at the cot.*] I guess he did n't like his bed. It's at least two hours ago.

MARIE [*with an amused glance at the cot; to* DELPHINA]. Well, then it can't be so very long before he'll be back.

DELPHINA [*with guilty mien lays the half roll on the table again; to* MRS. POLLINGER]. And when did my — [*she stops, ashamed to say "my husband," and wishing to correct herself*] when did —

[*She stops again, because it won't do for her to call him* MR. JURA; *she makes a helpless gesture.*]

MRS. POLLINGER [*as she does not understand, largo*]. What d'ye mean, ma'am?

DELPHINA [*at a loss*]. I mean, when — I mean, whether —

MARIE [*interrupting, to help out* DELPHINA]. She means, when did — [*acts as if she too were embarrassed for the proper name for* JURA] she means, whether — [*glad to find a recourse; quickly*] whether the two gentlemen went out together?

MRS. POLLINGER. No, the other gentleman did n't go out till much later.

[*She assures herself with a survey that everything is in good order and that she is not further needed; then exit centre.*]

DELPHINA [*with a sigh of relief, when* MRS. POLLINGER *is gone*]. One does feel so embarrassed before the servants in such cases.

MARIE. For most people it's fortunate that at least they *are* embarrassed before the servants. Otherwise — !

DELPHINA [*with a sudden resolve, very decisively, reaching for the coffee-pot*]. I think I will breakfast. It is certainly not good for me.

MARIE [*warning anxiously*]. Mrs. Jura! I don't know! Of course it's nothing to me, but I would n't advise you to do it. I don't know! I warn you!

DELPHINA [*relinquishing the pot; furious, quickly*]. He surely cannot demand that —

MARIE. You'll be surprised to find all the things he demands. [*Looks at her with a smile.*] Just wait until you're married to him: you'll begin a new life. For our dear Gustav knows how to keep one on the run, he does indeed. For the world-famed great man is really a perfect child, that can't take one step forward if one does n't help him and think for him and do everything for him. Between ourselves, of course, but you won't say anything and then you'll see it yourself when you're once married. And in a way that is something very beautiful for a woman, to give up her own life altogether and bring it to the man of her love as a sacrifice, to belong only to him, and not to exist for herself at all; perhaps it is the most beautiful experience any woman can possibly have. But it will be a little hard for you just at the beginning, for it takes some patience, patience and strong nerves. But one becomes used to it and it is the lot of woman.

DELPHINA [*with inward opposition*]. Nowadays people have a different idea about that, about the lot of woman. Nowadays a woman may also demand her right to a certain freedom.

MARIE [*very quietly*]. Not his wife. Oh no, not his wife! [*Smiling.*] You'll see when you're once married.

DELPHINA [*quickly*]. But I *am* married.

MARIE. Yes, you have been married, but with Gustav it's quite different. Not for one moment has one any peace. And especially in the fall, when he goes on his big concert tour. Oh, then I've often been really quite exhausted. Of course it was n't possible at all without me, for I always have to go along when he has a concert — that is when it is a [*smiling*] real concert. And the real concerts are almost more frequent. And then he's quite different, that is, he's excited. Oh, awful! And I have to dress him like a little child, or he'll forget everything, and then his collar's too tight and his tie does n't fit, and his shoes hurt him, well, just awful. And then to sit waiting in some hot, stuffy little room, while he's playing outside, is not very jolly either. You make up for it by sitting alone in the hotel, for he goes out afterwards with the enthusiasts, male and female, and then of course his wife can't go along, for a married pianist does n't take well, and he dare n't let it be known. But then when he comes back to the hotel, along about three or four in the morning, then he wakes me up, for then he's very communicative and insists on telling all about it. But in the morning I must pack while he is still sleeping, for of course we must go on by the next train. And then

you must n't on any account say anything, still less ask any question, in the morning he can't stand that at all. Yes, indeed, that's a very different Gustav Hein that you'll learn to know then, but in return you'll have him all to yourself. Well, you'll see all this for yourself, when you're once married.

DELPHINA [*involuntarily raging, sotto voce*]. I'm not married yet!

MARIE [*as if misunderstanding*]. Why, we shall all try to hasten the formalities as much as possible — of course I understand your impatience. [*In a different tone.*] But now be nice and tell me something about my husband, or rather your husband. I must learn over again too.

DELPHINA [*angrily*]. About Frank? No, there you must excuse me, I really don't know a thing. There's nothing to be said about Frank, he's not so interesting.

[*Almost weeps with anger.*]

MARIE [*hears the tearful ring in her voice and acts surprised*]. Why, what is the matter?

DELPHINA [*ashamed*]. I? Nothing. Nothing at all! What should be the matter? Hunger! Yes, hunger! [*At sight of the coffee, angry again.*] I must take the air a bit. I'll go out there [*points to the window*] and wait behind the house, excuse me.

[*Exit quickly through the centre door.*]

MARIE. I will call you as soon as Gustav comes.

[*Looks after her for a moment, still smiling; then her face becomes serious, she lowers her head, covers it with both hands, and sits thus until she slowly lifts her head again and her face once more takes on its intelligent smile of assurance.*]

[POLLINGER *through the centre door.*]

MARIE. What is it?

POLLINGER. I'm a-goin' down in to the canyon now, an' I was told to ask what the butcher 's to bring tomorro'.

MARIE. You'll have to ask the Master about that.

POLLINGER. I did, an' he said I was to ask the missus.

MARIE. Me?

POLLINGER. Yes.

MARIE. No, he can't have meant me.

POLLINGER. Yep. He says in so many words: Ye'll have to ask the missus 'bout that.

MARIE. But he meant Mrs. Jura.

POLLINGER [*slightly surprised, but in this house already used to anything and hence composed again at once*]. That so? — That so! Then I'll ask Mrs. Jura. 'Scuse me!

[*He opens the centre door, but waits at the door until* HEIN *and* JURA *have entered, then exit.*]

HEIN [*still invisible, outside at the centre door; insisting on giving* JURA *the precedence, with cheerful voice*]. No, no! After you, please!

JURA [*still invisible, outside at the centre door; insisting on giving* HEIN *the precedence, with animated deprecation; merry voice*]. After you! Please, after you!

HEIN. On no condition whatever!

JURA. No, then I'll go back into the woods again.

HEIN [*forcing* JURA *into the room, merrily*]. We'll just see who's master here.

JURA [*laughing*]. Well, if you use violence — ! [*Enters through the centre door, and becomes somewhat embarrassed as his eye falls on* MARIE; *his hands are full of dripping water-plants.*] Good morning, Mrs. Marie. Where do you suppose I can — ? [*He points to the plants and looks perplexedly about.*] We've been fishing. There's a glorious pool out in the woods.

[POLLINGER *exit through the centre door.* MARIE *has nodded at* JURA, *notices his embarrassed tone, and looks wonderingly at him.*]

HEIN [*has entered after* JURA; *in very good humor*]. It was wonderful!

JURA. But where — ?

MARIE [*pointing to the left-hand door*]. In the other room, please.

JURA [*hastily, visibly glad to get away; going to the left-hand door*]. Yes. I'll be right back. [*Already at the door, turning half around.*] But then I must visit the pool

once more today. You'll come along? There's many another catch there, you'll open your eyes!

[*Exit, laughing with pleasure.*]

HEIN [*kisses* MARIE *on the forehead by force of habit; then, looking after* JURA]. You know, he's a very pleasant fellow. All the things he knows and the way all nature is alive to him! An uncommonly sensible and agreeable young fellow; I should n't have thought it possible. [*Noticing that* MARIE *smiles; half excusing.*] We met each other in the path, and after all he's my guest, is n't he? And so we got to talking, he knows so much and I like him very much anyway. [*Sits down on the chair behind the table.*] We must keep up the acquaintance. It's a shame how little I really know about nature. And now there seems to be a new generation growing up which is remarkable, quite different. [*He observes that* MARIE *has had her breakfast; in a different tone, crossly.*] What's the matter with you today?

MARIE. I have had my breakfast.

HEIN [*indignant, with emphasis*]. Without me?

MARIE [*rising*]. I'll go and call Mrs. Jura right away.

HEIN [*without becoming excited, merely with faint ill humor, as one averts an unwelcome jest; curtly*]. Now stop that. Don't spoil this lovely morning for me. [*Pleasantly, merrily.*] Don't be silly!

MARIE [*standing to left of the table; very serious, slowly*]. Whether I am silly, my dear Gustav, whether it is not perhaps silly of me, — dear me, one can never know that in advance. But now it's settled, once for all.

HEIN. You certainly don't think that I think you're in earnest?

MARIE. Frank has my word and I have his.

HEIN [*measures her from top to toe*]. At your age! [*With a shrug, contemptuous.*] And that young fellow!

MARIE. You just said yourself how sensible and agreeable —

HEIN [*interrupting*]. But he is ten years younger than you.

MARIE. Then how much younger must she be than you?

HEIN [*vehemently*]. But do I want to marry her? I'm not thinking of it.

MARIE. You're only thinking of deceiving me.

HEIN [*irritated, impatient*]. Deceiving! As if you had n't always known.

MARIE. But now I won't have it any more. No, I will not endure it any more.

HEIN [*furious*]. Now all of a sudden!

MARIE. Yes, you're right there, I should never have endured it. But there is still time.

HEIN [*jumps up; lamenting like a child, almost whimpering*]. No, no, no! I don't like this! So early, on such a lovely morning! When you know that I need to have peace early in the morning! All year long a man works like a slave without getting anything out of it, and then when he finally has a day off for once, you take it this way. [*Complaining and pleading.*] Marie!

MARIE. Well, I'm very sorry, Gustav, but some time we have to talk to each other seriously.

HEIN [*with vigorous refusal*]. No! I won't! And what for?

MARIE. For as things have been going up to now, Gustav —

HEIN [*stops his ears, childishly obstinate*]. No, I won't, I won't, and if you don't stop — [*Goes to the centre door.*]

MARIE. But I will.

HEIN [*with the utmost rage*]. I say no!

MARIE. And this once in life you'll just have to do as I will.

HEIN [*looks at her a moment, taken aback; then whimpering again*]. No! [*With a vehement movement of both arms; in the utmost rage, roaring.*] No! [*Like an obstinate boy, running away.*] No, I say!

[*Exit impetuously through the centre door, which he slams behind him.*]

MARIE [*looks after him, the seriousness fading from her intelligent face; she goes past the table to the right and calls out of the window*]. Mrs. Jura! [*Then once again, louder.*] Mrs. Delphina!

[*As she hears* JURA *enter, she turns toward him, but remains at the right.*]

JURA [*through the left-hand door; quickly, amused*]. There, that's done now. [*As he notes that* HEIN *is gone, again slightly embarrassed.*] But where is your husband?

MARIE. Since when have we been so formal?

JURA [*with an embarrassed laugh*]. Oh.— I just thought, there's nobody else around.

MARIE [*sternly*]. Frank!

JURA [*embarrassed*]. Yes?

MARIE. Come here a minute!

JURA [*advances to her past the table*]. What is it?

MARIE. I have almost a suspicion.

JURA [*eagerly*]. No, oh no.

MARIE. I have almost a suspicion that you are not in earnest.

JURA [*emphatically*]. That's only, people always think that, because I simply can't look serious. [*In animated explanation.*] With my big teeth and because my mouth is always open, people always think I'm laughing. [*Very gravely.*] No indeed! When I once make a promise, Marie, I keep it.

MARIE [*slowly*]. I hope so!

JURA [*half to himself*]. Why that would be disgraceful. — [*In a different tone.*] But where is your husband?

MARIE [*sits down on the upholstered chair by the window to the right and takes some fancy work from the drawer of the little table.*] He'll be right back. He's simply working off a little fury outside, but his breakfast is still here. So he'll not be long.

JURA [*steps close to* MARIE; *ingenuously*]. Do you know, Marie, it seems to me that you undervalue your husband.

MARIE. You think so?

JURA [*with great zeal*]. Certainly! Of course he may have many points that are perhaps not exactly agreeable for a woman, granted. But yet I find him a very remarkable man just the same. I have never realized that so clearly heretofore. His masquerading, his posing must not deceive you, at bottom you find a very genuine and true individuality, and whoever comes to know him more intimately, as I have now, and has any faculty of judging human beings humanly, must surely say —

MARIE [*interrupting, as if reflecting*]. You think so?

JURA [*with animation*]. Certainly! [*Observing that she is laughing, almost vehemently.*] You're all unjust to him, I've noticed that! I used to be myself, but just wait, now that I know him I shan't give in until you —

MARIE [*interrupting; ironically*]. Splendid, Frank! And yet that was not really the purpose for which we came here.

JURA [*subdued, very quickly*]. No, it really was n't. [*Looks down a moment in perplexity, then sees the joke himself and begins to laugh heartily at it, rubbing his hands the while; amused, largo.*] No, it really was n't.

DELPHINA [*through the centre door; taken aback on seeing* JURA]. I thought you were calling me, Mrs. Marie.

MARIE [*rises and goes past the table to the left*]. Yes.

JURA [*around the table to the right, toward* DELPHINA; *very eagerly*]. You've come in the nick of time. You see we're disputing because Mrs. Marie, as happens so often in married life, completely misjudges her husband and does not dream what kind of a man he really is, in fact I must say she wholly fails to see the intrinsic worth of this man; there's really something fatal about marriage. But I'm sure you will agree with me, for you surely also have the feeling that he — [*Suddenly silenced as* MARIE *begins to laugh aloud, and looks wonderingly at her.*] What's the matter? What are you laughing at?

MARIE [*ceases laughing and puts on a grave face*]. No, no, I'm not laughing at all.

JURA [*shaking his head*]. As soon as you talk seriously with women, they begin to laugh.

MARIE [*splits a roll, spreads it with butter and inserts ham*]. But for the moment it is more important for Mrs. Delphina that she should learn to make his ham sandwiches. Hein-sandwiches, as he calls them. There's a Hein-cake too, by the way; you must n't let me forget to give you the recipe. For in these matters he is so terribly particular. — Did you notice? Cut as thin as possible, that is the bread, but spread as thick as possible; and he likes a dainty shape.

Otherwise, you know, it can spoil the whole forenoon for him, he's very exacting about it. [*Handing* DELPHINA *the knife.*] Here you are.

[DELPHINA *by the table to the left, beside* MARIE, *makes a sandwich.*]

JURA [*sits down on a chair to the right of the table and breakfasts; watching the women, laughing, to* DELPHINA]. Oh you, with your awkward paws, I wonder how you'll come out.

HEIN [*through the centre door, straight to the chair behind the table; to* DELPHINA]. Good morning, Del—[*he chokes over the name, he swallows and then repeats very formally*]. Good morning. [*Sits down and begins to eat with great appetite; to* JURA, *very cordially.*] Well, everything done?

JURA [*nods; then very eagerly*]. But we must certainly go back to the pool once more.

HEIN. Of course. I'm very eager about it, I'm fairly excited over it. What did you say was the name of those things? Eu—?

JURA. Euglenas.

HEIN. It even sounds pretty. And you claim that we can't determine whether they are plants or animals?

JURA [*with great animation, almost triumphantly*]. They can't decide themselves, the dear little Euglenas themselves, now scarcely resisting the inclination to become animals, now again restrained as if by fear, and so they hover between plant and animal, a little of each, but not completely either, just as—[*beginning to laugh*] as the modern man hovers between animal and God and is just as unable to decide. Is n't that splendid?

[DELPHINA *hands* HEIN *the plate of sandwiches.*]

HEIN [*agreeing with* JURA]. Splendid. [*Notices the plate of sandwiches; suspiciously.*] What's this for? What is it?

MARIE. Mrs. Jura has made your sandwiches for you.

HEIN [*takes the plate and puts it distrustfully away; crossly to* MARIE]. What *are* you up to again? When you know that I only like yours.

MARIE. Well, she's got to learn it now.

HEIN. Nobody can do that but you.

[*He takes the plate again, again surveys it distrustfully, and sets it aside with vexation. Slight pause, in which all are embarrassed.* DELPHINA *injured, goes to the left around the table and sits down on the chair in front of the table, hoping to breakfast at last.*]

JURA [*has finished eating and rises quickly*]. There! I'll go on ahead. It's really a shame to waste a single minute indoors. Meet you at the pool.

[*Goes to the centre door.*]

HEIN. I'll follow you right away.

JURA [*at the door; on a sudden impulse, to* MARIE]. And then I'd like it, Mrs.—Marie, if you could spare me a moment—

MARIE [*as if about to rise*]. Why surely, Frank. Whenever you say. I've always time for you!

JURA [*quickly*]. No, it's not so important. I'll come back later. [*One more amiable nod to her, then exit through the centre door, only to open it again; putting his head in.*] Goodbye, Delly. [*Exit.*]

HEIN [*piqued, to* MARIE]. What does he want of you? [*With malice.*] Or are you interested in the Euglenas too?

MARIE [*with a shrug*]. Perhaps.

HEIN [*suddenly turning his irritation against* DELPHINA]. And by the way, I must tell you, Mrs. Delphina, that you have given me an utterly false account of your husband. From your descriptions I had expected a dry, tedious scientist—and I find the most remarkable man, with a spirit that is artistic through and through, and fairly scintillant with youth. Why is it that women have no eyes to see the intrinsic worth of a man? Though I do not reproach you for it, it seems to be a fixed attribute of feminine nature. [*With a side glance at* MARIE, *in a tone of deep injury.*] Women are capable of living for ten years with a man without seeing what he is and what his wife has in him. Remarkable, indeed!

POLLINGER [*through the centre door; ad-*

vances to the left of table and steps up beside DELPHINA; *to her*]. How much meat shall I order, ma'am?

[HEIN *looks up from his meal and at first merely stares in wonder at* POLLINGER.]

MARIE [*after a slight pause; as* DELPHINA *does not answer*]. Mrs. Delphina, Pollinger is asking you.

DELPHINA [*startled*]. Me?

POLLINGER. Yes, how much meat I'm to order.

DELPHINA [*anxious, helplessly*]. Why, I don't know.

HEIN [*vehemently*]. Pollinger!

POLLINGER. Yes?

HEIN. Are you drunk this early in the morning?

POLLINGER [*wondering*]. No.

HEIN [*rebukingly*]. Then whom are you asking?

POLLINGER. The missus!—Master said I was to ask the missus, an' [*blinking leftward at* MARIE] the missus told me to ask [*blinking rightward at* DELPHINA] the missus.

HEIN. Ass!

POLLINGER [*vexed, almost rudely*]. 'T 's all the same to me, but I've got to know how much meat.

HEIN [*flaring up, roaring*]. Well, who is the mistress here?

POLLINGER [*also roaring*]. Wall, I thought [*bobbing his head at* MARIE] the missus was the missus, but the missus said [*bobbing his head at* DELPHINA] the missus was the missus! So what was I to — ? I don't know what to make of it!

MARIE [*at an angry glance from* HEIN; *feigning innocence, shrugging her shoulders*]. I thought — !

HEIN [*curtly dismissing* POLLINGER]. All right. Later. [*As* POLLINGER *goes to the centre door; with new rage.*] And don't come in like that unless somebody calls you. Knock first, at least.

POLLINGER [*already at the door; turns to* HEIN *once more, in surprise; expressing his wonderment very emphatically; angrily and loudly*]. What, d' ye mean even now?

HEIN [*roaring*]. Yes, even now! Why not now?

POLLINGER [*angry, very loud*]. A' right! [*Exit.*]

HEIN [*angry*]. The old toper. [*To* MARIE, *still more vehemently.*] But you're incredible yourself. As if you had simply laid a plot to — [*suddenly breaks off with a glance at* DELPHINA, *controls himself and says to* DELPHINA *in a voice as polite as it is unfriendly*] May I beg you to be so kind as to leave us alone for a moment? I have something to say to my wife. — [*In an altered tone, pointing to the left-hand door.*] My old upright piano is in there, you can practice, it won't hurt you a bit.

[DELPHINA *rises reluctantly, with a sorrowful glance at the food.*]

MARIE. But do let her have her breakfast first.

HEIN [*impatient, unsympathetic*]. Heavens, she can eat a little later for once; don't make such a fuss. [*Almost shouting at* DELPHINA.] It won't make any difference to you, will it?

DELPHINA [*already moving toward the door, with a last sorrowful look at the food, intimidated*]. No, certainly not. [*Exit.*]

HEIN [*calling after her, mechanically*]. Anyway, you ought to practice for a couple of hours the first thing every morning, otherwise you'll never get any power into your fingers.

MARIE [*really somewhat vexed*]. You're not very polite to your guests.

[*Rises and returns to the small table by the window, to sit down and take up her fancy work.*]

HEIN [*shortly*]. My dear, that's all very well, but I should hope I still have the right to be alone with my wife for once and undisturbed. [*In a different tone, softly, almost sentimentally.*] You know how I love this half-hour at breakfast with you. Otherwise I hardly have anything of you any more. [*As* MARIE *is silent, again in a changed tone, complaining peevishly.*] And what does this mean? What do you mean by telling Pollinger to ask Mrs. Jura about household affairs?

MARIE. My dear friend, I no longer have the right to give orders here —

HEIN [*still in the same vexed, complaining tone*]. Dear!

MARIE [*continuing*]. And so it was a very welcome opportunity to initiate my successor, so that little by little —

HEIN [*jumps up; vehemently*]. This nonsense has gone on long enough. [*Lights a cigarette; then more calmly.*] Shall I once more solemnly declare to you that I am not dreaming of marrying her?

MARIE [*lightly*]. Poor woman. What is she to do then?

HEIN [*unsympathetically*]. Her life with her husband is good enough.

MARIE. Only you keep forgetting that her husband is now going to be mine.

HEIN. He is n't!

MARIE [*with a shrug*]. All right, Gus, but now it's too late. Yesterday you were perfectly satisfied. Now he has my word.

HEIN [*walks past the table and over to her, stands still before her and looks reproachfully at her; shaking his head*]. What *has* come over you, Marie?

MARIE. Let us spare each other unnecessary reproaches and make the parting as painless as possible.

HEIN [*smoking, pacing up and down before the table*]. From his point of view I can see some sense in it. What should that splendid fellow do with such a — doll? [*After a few paces, turning again to her and standing still.*] But you! [*Reproachfully, with conviction*]. After all, you have me.

MARIE [*in simple inquiry*]. When do I?

HEIN [*looks wonderingly at her*]. What?

MARIE. I ask *when* I have you! Yes, when you are tired or sick or some time when you have n't had a success. And, yes, then too, at meals. You have faith in my cooking.

HEIN [*quickly*]. Well, and that proves to you —

MARIE. That I am a housekeeper to your complete satisfaction. But you see, Gus, in the long run that's not very much for a woman.

HEIN [*quickly*]. Must I tell you now how — [*raging*] do you want me to give you a declaration of love?

MARIE [*highly delighted*]. Oh yes!

HEIN [*furious*]. No! — It would be too ridiculous at my age. [*Seriously*]. No, if you do not feel yourself what you are to me, I cannot tell you. I cannot.

MARIE. They say you can do it quite well. — If the enthusiasts are to be believed.

HEIN [*carelessly, almost contemptuously*]. Gracious yes, if you mean the so-called love! [*Suddenly serious again, in a firm voice.*] But you may believe me when I say that I have never loved any one but you. [*Again in a different tone, half didactic, half irritated.*] There's a difference between loving a woman and simply — loving her.

MARIE. But suppose I wanted to have just that experience for once?

HEIN [*leaning against the table; frankly*]. Don't wish for that. It really does n't pay. I at least must say frankly that I envy every man who has been spared it.

MARIE [*comfortably*]. But Gus, then why?

HEIN [*not understanding*]. Why what?

MARIE. Then why do you keep doing it over and over?

HEIN [*with a shrug, irritated*]. Good gracious, why?

MARIE [*looking straight at him*]. Yes, why?

HEIN [*taken aback, looking at her*]. How should I know? [*Again bursting out vehemently and vexedly.*] And besides I'm my own master and can do or not do what I will.

MARIE [*steadily busied with her fancy work; calmly*]. With yourself. With yourself you can do or not do what you will. As far as you are concerned. But when it concerns me you will have to permit me to say yes or no to it, according to my feeling, as you do according to yours.

HEIN [*taken aback, looks at her; then as he turns away to the left and begins to pace up and down again, in a tone of mingled vexation and forced jollity*]. Since when have you been so terribly disagreeable, Moll? — On such a lovely day! [*Pointing to the window.*] Just look. Do you want to spoil my good humor?

MARIE [*dryly*]. You have often spoiled mine —

HEIN [*honestly astonished*]. I?

MARIE. On the loveliest days, when I sat alone at home and knew that you were having a — concert, one of these concerts. That was disagreeable too, Gus.

HEIN [*gravely, softly*]. You never said anything.

MARIE. You might have observed it.

HEIN [*in his impatiently peevish tone*]. Oh, you expect me to think of everything!

MARIE. That's why I'm taking the burden off you now, and am going to think of myself.

HEIN [*in the same peevish tone*]. What *is* the matter with you all of a sudden? What ails you?

MARIE. I have been thinking, and I have decided that it is no marriage, the way we live together.

HEIN [*pacing up and down; carelessly*]. Why not?

MARIE. Cross your heart, Gus, and say that this is a marriage.

HEIN [*impatiently*]. Marriage, child! Good heavens, marriage! That's these new-fangled notions. What is marriage? But all this comes from those silly books that they write nowadays. Why will you read such stuff? Marriage! What is marriage? Then call it something else. But, but it's wonderful just the same. [*Injured.*] To me it's wonderful. [*Comes to a stand and looks across at* MARIE; *meekly.*] Not to you?

MARIE [*slowly*]. To me?

HEIN [*impatiently*]. Yes.

MARIE [*weighing the word, with emphasis on the first syllable*]. Wonderful?

HEIN [*furious*]. Now don't quibble about the word, you know exactly what I mean.

MARIE [*slowly*]. Wonderful — my feeling for you is wonderful —

HEIN [*interrupting; curtly, as if that settled everything*]. Well then.

MARIE [*continuing*]. Even to this instant, strange to say.

HEIN [*piqued, growling*]. Strange to say?

MARIE. But it might be that just for that reason, because I wish to preserve that wonderful feeling, that I must leave you, before it crumbles away.

HEIN [*suddenly furiously jealous*]. And go to that young gentleman there? He collects emotions too, does he? Like his Eu— [*has forgotten the word and gropes for it*] Eu, Eugenias or whatever you call them? [*Close before her.*] I warn you. Be on your guard against that sort of man. They are deceivers. Take my word for it, I know people.

MARIE [*smiling*]. No, Gus, you certainly don't, what you do is to adjust people to your own satisfaction. As you happen to want them, that's the way you see them. For which reason you have always seen in me only a dear, quiet little woman, happy in looking upon your greatness, but incapable of following its flight, good at housekeeping.

HEIN [*very gravely*]. There you do me great injustice, Marie. No, the beautiful thing for me was the assured feeling of your joy in me, in me as a whole, with all its consequences, even when they are not always wholly pleasurable.

MARIE. But in the course of time, Gus, those "consequences," as you call them, have grown to be pretty numerous.

HEIN [*naïvely*]. I should have thought you would say to yourself: all that is a part of him, constituted as he is, otherwise he would n't be rounded out and that would be a pity, I don't want him to [*groping for a moment for the word*] wither up, as most people do.

MARIE. You must surely admit that I have made every effort to keep you from withering.

HEIN [*without noticing her irony*]. Yes! And for that I was so grateful to you, because I assumed that you understood that it is simply a part of my complete nature to need glamour and motion around me, whether it's beautiful pictures and costly utensils or ornaments and all kinds of baubles and this other, — the smiles of women.

MARIE. But they have rather overdone the smiling.

HEIN [*furious*]. I can't live like a monk! — [*Again childishly stubborn, almost whimpering.*] Once for all, I need that sort of thing, the flicker and rustle and glitter of life about me.

MARIE [*looking up from her work, slowly*]. Still?

HEIN [*vehemently*]. Now more than ever. — I can't suddenly stop now. Or do you think I'm old already? [*Pacing furiously.*]

A newspaper chap wrote not long ago: The still handsome Gustav Hein! You understand the infamy? "Still handsome!" — And everywhere I meet that all of a sudden. Because they can't attack my ability, the gentlemen who stand behind me, in their impatience, determined to get my place for themselves, they count up my years, thinking that will do it, for of course no calumny is too stupid for the public. [*Shouting.*] But I'm not going to abdicate this long time, I can still face down the whole gang of them! [*Changing his tone, persuasively, as if she surely must see this.*] And now just think if I should suddenly turn into a sober married man, would n't they all say: look, he's beginning to retire! [*In a didactic tone.*] Yes, my dear, the man who gives up the battle deserves to be beaten. [*Again more calmly.*] Don't you understand that? Women, my dear Marie, are success. That is why one needs it. And then too one needs it for his emotional life. I don't want to be old yet.

MARIE [*smiling*]. But Gus, is n't that a little as if a man would n't take off his summer clothes, so as to keep winter away? In the end the winter will come anyhow, and you'll simply freeze all the more. [*Again in her ironical tone.*] Anyway, you 've given me quite a plausible explanation of why you keep doing it over and over.

HEIN [*vexed, quickly*]. If you could only get out of the habit of always saying that I do it.

MARIE. Why, who else?

HEIN [*vehemently*]. Well, not I at least!

MARIE. You surely won't try to persuade me that it's they. Gustav, stop and think a bit.

HEIN [*thoughtfully*]. They ? Well, I won't exactly claim that either. It sort of begins of itself.

MARIE [*lightly*]. Oh, it's this "it" that's to blame for everything, is it?

HEIN. It! I can't say it any differently. [*Turns the chair to the right of the table around toward her and seats himself; explaining.*] You know, it's like a player-piano, the roll unwinds, quite mechanically, you understand?

MARIE [*amused*]. Not quite.

HEIN [*quickly; pleased to have found a comparison*]. Or like a game of chess. When you know how to play it. Imagine two good players, one of them begins and the other one knows right away: Aha, the Spanish opening, or the queen's gambit and so on, you see? And now it goes on without thought, move after move, the fingers taking care of it quite mechanically, till all at once you're in the midst of the game, are n't you?

MARIE. Well, and?

HEIN. Well, and that's the way it is with women, all at once you're in the midst of the game, before you've had any time to think. [*Leaning back in his chair.*] Well, then what's left for me to do, do be fair-minded. I have to go out to functions, that's business. And they seat somebody beside me. Well, how shall I talk to her? What about? And otherwise as like as not she'll start on music, and that's really more than a man can stand. Anything rather than that, for heaven's sake. Well and so it just goes on, once the game is opened, move after move, Spanish opening, queen's gambit or Scotch game, according to the opening, quite mechanically, by reflex action, while one can at least pursue his quiet musings undisturbed. [*Impatiently, eagerly.*] Good heavens, just imagine it. The lady sits there beside you, expectant, for after all you have a reputation — what are you going to do? You are bored, for of course a real conversation is not possible with our ladies, and yet you can't be impolite, and so just to say something you look at her and say: You are a strange creature. And you're lost from that moment. Or you say: Spring will soon be here. Lost again. Or you say, in any sort of connection: Goethe and Frau von Stein — ! Utterly lost. You're always lost, for no matter what you say, she responds, then you do the same, if only out of laziness, for all you need is to let your tongue go, and so it goes on irresistibly, and you have n't noticed at all that you're in the midst of the game. But then you can't suddenly get up and declare: Oh, excuse me, I was n't intending to play. —

Probably she was n't either, but dear me, when you sit side by side like that — and dinners get longer and longer — [*impatiently*] you must understand that! [*Summing up, in an almost pedantically didactic tone.*] In my intercourse with women little by little a certain combination of phrases or politenesses, or whatever you want to call it, has developed, and now it functions all by itself, without really asking me at all — [*shrugging his shoulders*] my dear, I am really helpless in the matter.

MARIE. And that is called love?

HEIN [*confirming; quite serious*]. That is called love. You can rest assured that in nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand cases — it's nothing but — in our set, of course I mean, among [*gropes for a word*] cultivated people! A table conversation, a gramophone record, nothing more. To which is added in the case of a man like me the vanity of our dear ladies: having had the good fortune to sit beside you, they simply make use of it and insist on a — well, say an autograph. [*Again almost whimpering.*] And what am I to do? For that's just a part of it. Would n't it be a poor grocer's clerk that did n't have every cook falling in love with him? [*Looks into space a moment; then in a different tone; very seriously, softly.*] Let me have a few more years, after that I hope we shan't need it any more. [*Lowering his head, thoughtfully to himself, softly.*] And then — [*lifts his head and looks at* MARIE *very seriously*] then — [*suddenly jumping up and stepping beside her; very heartily, very happily, almost exuberantly; quickly*] then, my dear old Moll, then we'll move away from the stupid city and into the cabin here and then —

MARIE [*humorously declining*]. No, not into this cabin, please!

HEIN [*very quickly, very happily*]. Or anywhere you say, to the seashore or into the woods or the desert, only away from the city and to ourselves. And then, Moll, you shall learn to know the true Gus, a Gustav as yet undiscovered, who no longer needs to be the famous Hein. [*Laughing hilariously.*] And then at last I'll even be able to afford the luxury of being old. [*Claps his hands and begins to leap and dance through the room like a child.*] How nice that'll be, how nice! [*Hearing the left-hand door move, he stops short, suddenly serious again, and shouts furiously at* DELPHINA.] What *is* it? Did n't I expressly ask you — ! Can't one have one moment — ?

DELPHINA [*with swift decision, has entered; intimidated by* HEIN'S *rage*]. I just thought — and [*with her whole force, defiantly*] and because I have n't had any breakfast yet — !

HEIN [*steps in front of her; vehemently*]. You were going to practice, I thought. I have n't heard anything.

DELPHINA [*almost crying with anger*]. After breakfast!

HEIN [*takes her by the shoulders and once more shoves her through the left-hand door; beginning to be amused himself*]. Practice away! Just practice in the meantime. I'll call you when we're through.

[DELPHINA *thrust through the door by* HEIN, *exit left; inside she begins to play scales on the piano.*]

HEIN [*his hand on the knob of the half-open door, listens a moment to her playing; then shaking his head, with contempt*]. That empty, soulless, ineffectual touch contains all she is. [*With a click of the tongue.*] Pooh! [*Shuts the door, the playing is no longer heard, he goes to the right again; with a glance at* MARIE, *merrily.*] What sort of a gloomy face is this you're putting on again?

MARIE [*gravely*]. I'm just wondering.

[HEIN *makes a questioning gesture.*]

MARIE. And I ask myself whether you have never thought that one of these women, to whom you present your, your autograph, might also be a worth-while person, and how much you are perhaps destroying in her.

HEIN [*carelessly*]. Oh, these modern young women!

MARIE. And I don't suppose they are all alike.

HEIN [*lightly*]. No, but you can imagine that a woman who betrays her husband is hardly likely to be one of the "worth-while" people.

MARIE [*shaking her head*]. You say that? On my word, the worst seducers are always the worst Philistines.

HEIN [*slightly vexed*]. A "worth-while" woman does not betray her husband. That does n't make a man a Philistine. Why have n't you betrayed me?

MARIE [*laughing*]. Why? — I don't know myself. But — [*with altered tone; slightly threatening*] but if for example you really refuse to set me free to go to my beloved Frank —

HEIN [*merrily, dryly*]. I refuse.

MARIE [*shrugging her shoulders, dubiously*]. Well, then — !

HEIN [*merry, comfortably*]. Well, then?

MARIE. Then to be sure you force me —

HEIN. You mean — ?

MARIE. Then you force me to betray you.

HEIN [*merry, shortly*]. All right.

MARIE. All right?

HEIN [*with a gesture of blessing her*]. Betray me.

MARIE [*in the same tone*]. All right.

HEIN [*with malice*]. For you'll make a mess of it. You don't know how.

MARIE. Are you so sure?

HEIN [*stands close before her, merely looks at her and nods; then, seriously*]. And you see that's what I call a marriage, a true marriage. [*Again more lightly.*] For it all depends on the woman, only on the woman. [*Walks toward the left, laughing, in very high spirits.*] But now I'm simply curious to see how you'll go about it. You with your beloved Frank and with the [*nodding his head toward the left-hand door*] pianist. [*Maliciously.*] There you've got into a nice mess. [*Laughs.*]

MARIE [*reflecting*]. Well, first of all you will —

HEIN. I? I shall nothing!

MARIE [*with slight impatience*]. Allow me!

HEIN [*very quickly*]. I allow nothing. I know nothing, the whole thing does not concern me in the least.

MARIE. You'll surely have to tell Delphina —

HEIN [*imperturbably*]. Not a word. You 'll kindly settle it among yourselves. I did n't start it.

MARIE. Then who did?

HEIN [*honestly astonished*]. Certainly not I! [*Puts both hands on his heart, protesting.*] I? [*As he suddenly recollects; crossly.*] Oh, well, to that extent, if you mean that, to be sure — [*changes his tone; with solemn assurance*] but look here, I really can't do a thing, for in love affairs, if they don't run smoothly, I'm terribly awkward, I really am.

MARIE [*catching up the word; sarcastic*]. You'd rather have them run smoothly, of course?

HEIN [*merry*]. No, no, God forbid. [*Maliciously.*] But you'll have to make the arrangements, I'm not ambitious in such matters, I'll duck. [*Stealing on tiptoe to the centre door.*] You've deserved the punishment.

DELPHINA [*through the left-hand door, going with the utmost resolution to the table*]. I must have my breakfast.

[*Sits down on the chair before the table and begins to eat ravenously.*]

HEIN [*behind the table; suddenly assuming a captivating amiableness; handing her the plate of sandwiches and the honey*]. Oh, yes, that's right. I suppose you're hungry already? Oh, poor Delly! And you practiced so hard. Here you are, here! [*Puts everything before her; to* MARIE.] You'll see that our poor Delly wants for nothing? And then talk the thing out, just talk the whole thing out.

[*Running off merrily and hastily; exit through the centre door.*]

MARIE [*while* HEIN *is leaving, as she rises and approaches* DELPHINA; *in a peculiarly heavy and emphatic tone*]. Yes. Gustav! No matter how hard it may be for me. [*Advances to* DELPHINA, *who takes her two hands and turns her around; she looks at her sadly for a moment, then suddenly embraces her; then, softly.*] Be happy with him. I don't wish anything but your happiness. And you will make him happy, yes, you will. [*Strokes her hair tenderly.*] I should never have thought I could do it. And I should have grudged him to any one else. But you! You are the wife that he needs. What am I? [*Sadly smiling.*] An old

woman. But you will make him happy and I shall help you, for I will always be at hand, like a faithful domestic spirit, I had to promise him that and I solemnly swear it to you — for I am so fond of him! [*With an outburst.*] Oh, I am so fond of him!

DELPHINA [*trying to free herself; piqued*]. But since you're going to marry Frank — !

MARIE [*interrupting; with slight contempt*]. Gracious, dear child, Frank! One surely can't compare the two, do you think so? I certainly like Frank very much, but Frank and Gustav!

DELPHINA [*with increasing pique*]. You are unjust to Frank!

MARIE. Why no, only — Frank is no Gustav Hein.

DELPHINA [*embittered*]. Then I simply don't understand —

MARIE. What?

DELPHINA [*outraged*]. Why you did n't stay with Gustav Hein!

MARIE. But, my dearest friend, I should have been glad to stay with him! But since he loves you! What else is there for me? It's natural to look for a refuge wherever you can find one.

DELPHINA [*outraged*]. Refuge!

MARIE. You see I don't wish for more than some quiet spot in which to dedicate myself to the fond recollection of Gustav Hein.

DELPHINA [*jumping up, embittered*]. You seem to imagine Frank as very easily satisfied.

MARIE. Why, he's not spoiled.

DELPHINA [*almost crying*]. I thought that at least you loved him. For —

MARIE. Do be calm. Whatever is the matter with you? [*Shrugging her shoulders; in a very indifferent tone.*] Why, I do love him. Of course with a different and quieter love — of course that's natural when you try to make coffee from the dregs.

DELPHINA [*with the utmost resolution*]. No, no!

MARIE. And he too must simply make some sacrifice to make Gustav happy. We must all make a sacrifice: he, I, you — you of course also, for you will have to give up a good many things, but what difference, if only Gustav is happy? If only Gustav is happy!

DELPHINA [*with an outburst*]. No, no — I'd rather give him up.

MARIE [*seizes both her hands again; with the utmost surprise*]. Give him up? Give up Gustav Hein? Child, you are surely not in earnest?

JURA [*quickly through the centre door; stops short as he perceives* DELPHINA, *this being visibly unpleasant to him*]. Listen, Delly, I must beg you —

MARIE [*goes straight towards* JURA, *opening her arms to him*]. Oh, there you are, dear Frank!

[*Holds up her face to be kissed.* DELPHINA *makes an angry gesture.*]

JURA [*kisses* MARIE *absent-mindedly; then hastily to* DELPHINA]. I must beg you to leave us alone for a moment.

DELPHINA [*angrily*]. I'm just sent away all the time.

JURA [*very hastily*]. I'll explain to you afterward —

MARIE. Do let her have her breakfast first.

JURA [*impatiently, very hastily*]. Time enough for that. [*Very impatiently, to* DELPHINA.] Now do go away, please. Don't you hear?

DELPHINA [*taking the coffee with her; almost crying with anger*]. I'm going!

[*Goes to the left-hand door.*]

JURA [*following her with a plate*]. Oh, you have n't had your breakfast?

DELPHINA [*crying*]. No, I *have n't* had my breakfast. [*Exit left.*]

JURA [*at the door, with the plate; speaking into the room, hastily*]. Why, it's very nice in there, too. And you can surely understand that one sometimes has things to say, when any third person, even if it were your best friend — can't you? [*Very impatiently.*] Take this, please.

[*Hands her the plate and shuts the door quickly.*]

MARIE [*behind the centre table; perplexed by* JURA'S *haste, curiously*]. What is it, Frank?

JURA [*stands before the left-hand door, arms akimbo, and looks at her wide-eyed*].

Well, this is a pretty mess! And the worst of it is that you'll probably think I am the one — [*Takes two paces toward her.*] And yet I can say that in these twenty-four hours of our acquaintance you have become so really precious to me, and come closer to me spiritually than perhaps any other living soul. I have rarely known any one with whom one could talk so from the heart as with you; and you understand everything. It must be very beautiful to be married to you. For that's just what one needs in married life.

MARIE [*ironically*]. Well, just the fact that two people can talk pleasurably and well to each other is after all not the whole —

JURA. Really it's terribly stupid that two people only have the choice of being utter strangers or else being married right off, whereas one ought rather to strive to be on good terms with as many people as possible, which is if anything actually impeded by marriage. How long will it take before people see that and devise better institutions?

MARIE [*smiling*]. And was it to ask me this — ?

JURA [*begins to laugh heartily*]. No, no, it was n't, but you know how I am: I'm forever encountering problems, it's terrible. But the worst of all the problems I have yet encountered [*begins to laugh afresh, surveying her with a shake of the head*] is how such a sensible person as you — can be so stupid, so stupid! [*With plaintive surprise.*] Marie, Marie! [*Goes to her and asks reproachfully.*] Could you really seriously think of having Gustav and Delphina marry? Marie! Where *were* your eyes? Why, those two would be the unhappiest people in the world! [*With still more emphatic complaint, shrugging his shoulders.*] Marie!

MARIE [*softly, in a wholly impersonal tone that conceals her irony*]. Frank, the idea was not mine at all.

JURA [*vehemently*]. But I did n't know Gustav at all. Why, he's quite different from what I thought him. Delphina has given me an utterly false description of him. [*Quietly, impersonally, sententiously.*] In these matters one can never rely on women. [*Again very animated and vexed.*] She evidently has n't the least conception of him. Gushes, falls in love, and runs off — and does n't know who, how, or what — just like a woman! [*With increasing animation.*] For you're just as bad. [*To mitigate the vehemence of his tone.*] Don't be angry, dear Marie, but you must surely admit — [*again very vehement*]. I simply don't understand you. You too evidently have n't the least conception of him — how else could you have even dreamed of leaving him? [*Passing more and more to a quarrelsome tone.*] And with all your cleverness, you did n't see that Delphina lacks everything, simply everything, that Gustav needs in a wife? You did n't see that those two, constituted as they are, would be utterly miserable inside of a week? You did n't see all that and would simply have let them run blindly into it?

MARIE [*meekly*]. Yes, scold me well!

JURA. Now I'm going to tell you what I've discovered. I have discovered that for Gustav there is only one woman in the world such as this strange person requires. Yes, Marie.

MARIE [*shrugging her shoulders*]. Well, all right.

JURA. And do you know who it is?

MARIE [*indifferently*]. No.

JURA [*after a slight pause; importantly*]. You. — In the whole world you, and you only.

MARIE [*smiling*]. But Frank, I thought that ten years ago when I married him.

JURA [*irritated*]. But then, the first time everything did n't go just according to your expectations, of course all that was forgotten, and it was simply away from him, away, no matter if he went down to ruin, and perhaps another soul with him. For goodness' sake, when you belong to a person you've got to take a little pains with him, don't you think so? [*Again very eager.*] Anyway, one ought to take much more pains with people, with all people!

MARIE [*with quiet amusement*]. Why, I'm just beginning on you three.

JURA [*surprised by her tone; with a sudden suspicion*]. Oh! [*Begins to laugh; reproach-*

fully.] But, Marie! Oh, oh! [*Laughing aloud.*] I'll wager you were n't serious with me from the very first.

MARIE. Not for one moment, Frank.

JURA [*much amused*]. You know I had a sort of an uncertain feeling right away. But you can lie! It's perfectly wonderful!

[*Looks at her with admiration.*]

MARIE. Marriage is a good school for it. And after all one likes to have a little entertainment once in a while.

JURA [*laughing*]. And so you won't be at all offended if I — withdraw? [*Suddenly serious again.*] Yes, but really only because it is better for both, for him and for her.

MARIE [*smiling*]. No, I am not offended.

JURA [*with childlike pleasure*]. That's nice, that's sensible! You're such a splendid person! I'm fairly in love with you.

MARIE [*watches him with a smile and shakes her head*]. But now just tell me one thing. I would so like to know.

JURA. Yes?

MARIE. You were ready to give up your wife — ?

JURA. Yes.

MARIE. And now you are ready again — ?

JURA [*nodding*]. Yes, now I'm ready to take her back again. And?

MARIE. And I'd so like to know: do you really love your wife, or not?

JURA [*eagerly*]. Why, but that's very simple.

MARIE. Do you love her, or not?

JURA [*ingenuously, very eagerly*]. Why, according as it is better for her. — It all depends on that. Does n't it?

MARIE [*shaking her head, smiling*]. You're inhuman, Frank.

JURA [*eagerly, seriously*]. Yes, that's what they always say when a man acts reasonably for once. And yet I'm convinced that we shall live to see that come into style. [*There is a loud knock at the left-hand door, he hastens to it.*] Yes?

DELPHINA [*outside, calling; greatly embittered*]. Shall I disturb you?

JURA. Come right in.

MARIE [*smiling*]. We have just finished.

DELPHINA [*entering; with utmost bitterness*]. Oh, I don't want to disturb you on any account. Not on any account.

[*Starts for centre door.*]

MARIE [*going to centre door*]. No, please stay here. I must go to the kitchen, or we'll really get nothing to eat today.

JURA [*to whom it is not at all agreeable to be alone with* DELPHINA; *embarrassed, to* MARIE]. Why are you going? Do stay.

MARIE [*plaintively coquettish, to* DELPHINA]. You see, he does n't give me a moment's peace. [*Making sheep's eyes at* JURA, *pleading.*] Only five minutes, Frank. Do be sensible. Then I'll be with you again.

[*Escapes him; exit through the centre door.*]

JURA [*does not understand at all and merely murmurs with a shake of the head*]. What's this, what's this?

DELPHINA [*indignant at* MARIE'S *sentimental tone; speaking after her, toward the door*]. I believe you! [*Imitating* MARIE.] "Then I'll be with you again." [*Full of wrath.*] I believe you! [*Rushes at* JURA *and grasps him by the hand.*] Frank!

JURA [*turns in alarm to her*]. Yes! What's the matter?

DELPHINA [*in the utmost excitement*]. Frank, listen to me. We have no time to lose. Every moment is precious.

JURA [*involuntarily infected by her excitement; hastily*]. Well, what is it? What is it?

DELPHINA [*conjuring him*]. Frank, this woman is playing false with you!

JURA [*laughing heartily at her; broadly*]. Why, Delly! This woman —

DELPHINA [*adjuring him*]. Frank, you don't know anything about women.

JURA [*good humoredly didactic*]. Delly, you owe it to this woman —

DELPHINA [*screaming*]. Frank, this woman is a knave.

JURA [*beginning to get angry*]. Now listen, I must really insist. This woman —

DELPHINA [*as loudly as she possibly can*]. This woman does not love you, Frank.

JURA [*halts in his anger; taken aback, very loudly, very shrill*]. What?

[*Begins to laugh all over his face.*]

DELPHINA [*triumphing*]. No! [*Chopping*

off each word, emphasizing each one equally.] She — does — not — love — you! No, Frank!

JURA [*shakes with laughter and agrees heartily with her*]. No.

DELPHINA [*perfectly furious*]. Don't laugh like a fool, Frank, in —

JURA [*is still laughing so hard that he cannot speak and merely motions to her with his hands*]. Oh my, oh my!

DELPHINA [*continuing undisturbed*]. In your terrible infatuation you don't dream —

JURA [*almost choking with laughter, motioning with his hands*]. Oh, but I do, I do!

DELPHINA [*still continuing*]. That this criminal woman merely wishes to use your madness —

JURA [*seizes her by both hands, shakes her, and cries*]. Now stop and let me explain to you —

DELPHINA [*in the greatest fear, beseechingly*]. No. I won't let you explain anything — later, Frank, tomorrow, Frank, but now, Frank — [*shaking him by both hands*] Frank, time is flying and any minute this terrible woman can — Come!

[*Tries to drag him away.*]

JURA [*frees himself from her*]. But where to? Do listen first.

DELPHINA [*breathless*]. Frank, for this woman you are only a — [*crying with rage*] a refuge! Frank, she called you a quiet spot! Frank, dear, darling Frank!

[*Casts herself weeping on his breast.*]

JURA [*holds the sobbing* DELPHINA *to his breast*]. Well, and Gustav? How about Gustav? You love Gustav, don't you?

DELPHINA [*on his breast, passionately sobbing and crying like a child*]. No, no, no, I don't want to any more.

JURA [*beginning to get angry again*]. But you did love Gustav?

DELPHINA [*blubbering*]. No, no, no! [*Sobbing still more violently.*] Don't ask me, I don't know, don't torture me so! I can't tell about that. You must hold me tighter, Frank.

JURA [*tenderly stroking her hair, compassionately*]. Delly, poor little Delly!

DELPHINA [*tears herself away and draws him with her by the hand; in the same fear-driven tone as before*]. But now come, come away! Before the time passes. Come, come. We must flee!

JURA [*laughing*]. Flee? Why flee, child?

DELPHINA [*in utter fear*]. Oh, do come, or it will be too late. Frank, Frank, we must flee before it's too late, we must, Frank!

JURA [*yielding*]. All right, then we'll flee. But I *should* like to say goodbye.

DELPHINA [*crying out, in the utmost terror*]. No, Frank, no! The moment we face those two frightful people again, we're lost! Frank, we can be in the canyon in an hour, there we'll get a carriage, and then, Frank, to ride with you out into the beautiful springtime — Frank, if you ever loved me the least little bit — [*Again casts herself on his breast.*] Oh Frank, I never knew how much I love you, Frank, my darling Frank — [*She hears the centre door open, turns about with a start, sees* HEIN, *screams, and runs off; beckoning to* JURA; *beseechingly.*] Frank, Frank!

[*Exit through the centre door.*]

[HEIN *has opened the centre door at her last words, puts on an expression of consternation on seeing her in* JURA'S *arms, steps a trifle to the left, with a slight bow, to let her pass him, and looks amused at* JURA.]

JURA [*hastening after her; as he goes out, to* HEIN, *quickly; in amused explanation*]. You see we're fleeing. I shall write you a letter. [*Exit through the centre door; he can be heard outside saying to* MARIE, *very hastily, much amused.*] Goodbye, Marie, goodbye! [*Exit.*]

MARIE [*enters through the centre door, which she closes behind her, and looks at* HEIN *with a smile*]. Well?

HEIN [*nods*]. Bravo. — You managed that very cleverly.

MARIE. The easiest thing was simply to make her abduct her husband.

HEIN [*pacing through the room; with a sigh of relief*]. And so we're rid of them. — [*In a changed tone, regretfully.*] And yet I'm really sorry for him. But just the nicest men you can't enjoy, because they always have such wives. It's badly distributed. [*Stops short, looks up and at*

MARIE; *smiling, tenderly.*] I'm content. And now — do you know what? Now we two will stay here quite quietly for a couple of days. Want to?

MARIE [*smiling*]. If you wish it.

HEIN. That's something I've always wished for, to be alone up here for once. [*With yearning.*] Alone!

MARIE [*smiling; in her dry, ironical tone*]. Alone.

HEIN [*looks up, taken aback, then understands the reproach; in his childishly cross and stubborn tone*]. Oh, you know well enough what I mean. — [*Startled by a sudden thought.*] Only — no! [*He puts his hand to his hair; regretfully.*] No, I'm sorry to say we can't.

MARIE. Yes we can, Gustav. I brought the hair-dye with me.

HEIN [*delighted*]. You are really an angel, Marie, you think of everything. [*Becoming sentimental.*] Oh, Marie, if I did n't have you! [*Seeing her laugh; vexed.*] Yes, there you are laughing again. There 's something so unwomanly about your mockery. With you a man can never really — you have no feeling, Marie.

MARIE [*in her ironical tone*]. That's the trouble.

HEIN [*slowly in an injured tone*]. And yet I can say to you that you are the only woman I have ever really loved in all my life. And when I think of the others — you can be assured that I don't understand it myself.

MARIE [*in ironical explanation*]. Oh well, Gus: Spanish opening, queen's gambit, and so on.

HEIN [*looks at her with a smile and shakes his head; then seriously, very simply*]. Never again.

MARIE. Gus, it is n't safe to swear off.

HEIN [*firmly*]. No, Marie, never again. I feel that. [MARIE *goes to the centre door.*]

HEIN [*hearing her go, looking up*]. What is it?

MARIE. I must go into the kitchen again. That will confirm you still more in your good resolution.

[*Exit through the centre door.*]

HEIN [*calling after her, much pleased*]. Yes? Shall we eat soon? [*Looks merrily after her, then goes cheerfully to the sofa, lies down at full length and stretches his limbs luxuriously.*] We're fools, all of us, we city folks. [*Lying flat and closing his eyes.*] Not to know anything more about it, or care about anything or anybody. And no concerts any more, of any kind. [*Longingly.*] Eyah! [*There is a loud knock at the centre door, he starts up; crossly.*] Come in!

POLLINGER [*puts his head in; alarmed*]. Sir!

HEIN [*furious*]. What?

POLLINGER. A lady! Another lady!

HEIN [*in his cross, scolding, almost whining tone*]. What sort of a lady?

POLLINGER [*shrugging his shoulders; merely showing with his hands the size of the hat*]. Her hat's like this.

HEIN [*roaring at him*]. I mean what's her name?

POLLINGER. You can't get it out of her, she's too excited. But she says she'll have to kill herself otherwise.

HEIN [*guesses that it is one of his pupils*]. Aha! [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Well.

[*Nods to* POLLINGER *to let her in.* POLLINGER *exit through the centre door.*]

HEIN [*rising slowly and wearisomely; vexed, shaking his head*]. Twenty-four hundred and sixty-nine feet above sea-level!

EVA [*through the centre door; gigantic hat, fantastic Alpine costume; with a huge bouquet of white and lilac anemones; confused, ashamed; breathes*]. Master!

[*She holds out the flowers to him with emphasis.*]

HEIN [*goes to meet her, at once resuming his affected, gallant tone, and becoming a Celadon once more*]. Little Eve! What a surprise! And the lovely flowers!

[*Takes the bouquet.*]

EVA. A few quiet wild-flowers from beside the path, but I picked them for you, Master, and to each one clings one of my thoughts of you, and to each one a secret tear.

HEIN [*absent-minded, merely to say something, and still in his customary sentimental tone*]. Yes, they are still quite wet. — But what are these delicate little feet doing on our rocks?

EVA [*about to sink before him; ecstatically*]. Master! Can you forgive me?

HEIN [*lifts her up in the act, rather awkwardly, as the great bouquet gets in his way; in affected consolation*]. Poor Eve. What is the matter with you? Whatever has happened to my little Eve?

EVA [*breathless again at the mere recollection*]. It impelled me to come here, I felt driven, yes, driven and lashed by fear and shame and — [*Wants to say "love," does not dare, and substitutes for it an upward glance and a sigh.*] Oh, Master! [*She seems to forget herself and to be sinking on his breast.*] What have I done? Oh, what have I done?

HEIN [*catches her in time to prevent her sinking on his breast*]. Little Eve! What *is* the matter? Tell me!

EVA. I am a wretched woman.

HEIN [*laying the flowers on the table; absently*]. Are you? Well and? Tell your story.

EVA. Will you forgive me?

HEIN [*quite carelessly*]. Everything. Who could resist your eyes?

EVA [*sobbing*]. You know it was I, it was I, I, I — [*Covers her face with both hands.*] Oh, horrible!

HEIN [*feigning surprise*]. It was you? [*Changing his tone, impersonally.*] What was you?

EVA [*in a tone that also betrays how proud she is of it*]. It was I that telegraphed Mr. Jura — [*Suddenly very quickly, and now in an unmistakably genuine tone.*] But only out of hatred against this shameless person that is not worthy of you, Master, for I swear to you, as true as I —

HEIN [*interrupting hastily, amused*]. She's already gone.

EVA [*quickly, grateful, happy*]. She's already gone?

HEIN [*with a brief gesture that indicates all is settled*]. Gone.

EVA [*with blissful eyes, pressing her hand to her heart*]. Oh, Master! [*Narrating again, in eager assurance.*] For really, only out of hatred of this person and out of jealousy and out of my unbounded reverence [*repeats with an upward glance*], and reverence — [*with dropping voice*] and not merely reverence — [*making her voice quiver and lowering her eyes.*] Oh, Master!

HEIN [*busily, offering her the chair to the right of the table*]. But do have a seat, child. You must be tired, little Eve.

EVA [*seating herself on the chair to the right of the table*]. No, Master. Oh no, I am not tired.

HEIN [*trying to soothe her*]. And hungry! Just a minute and I'll —

[*Turning toward the centre door.*]

EVA [*quickly grasps his hand and restrains him*]. No, Master, no! For I have you. — [*Leaning back, with closed eyes.*] Oh, Master, if you knew what it means to me that I may be here with you, here in your cabin, in the cabin! [*Shivers, shakes herself.*]

HEIN [*sitting on the table beside her; lightly*]. Yes, it is quite pleasant here, is n't it? And especially in the spring, when —

[*Breaks off in alarm, as it occurs to him that this is the ladies' cue, and makes a grimace, eyeing her from the side.*]

EVA [*with closed eyes*]. Spring, yes! For in me too, Master, the spring has come. [*Starts up in alarm, hearing* MARIE *enter.*]

MARIE [*through the centre door; has heard the last words, smiles and nods amusedly; going to the sideboard, to* HEIN, *who has half turned toward her*]. I did n't know you had company. I just have to see if — [*opens the sideboard, nods, and takes a bottle out*] yes.

HEIN [*goes to* MARIE, *embarrassed; introducing*]. Mrs. Eva, Eva —

[*He does n't know her surname.*]

EVA [*rising, with a slight bow to* MARIE]. Gerndl.

MARIE [*with a slight bow to* EVA]. Yes, we know each other.

HEIN [*going to* MARIE; *embarrassed*]. One of my pupils. One of my most diligent pupils.

MARIE [*closing the sideboard; to* EVA]. Please do not let yourself be disturbed in the slightest. [EVA *sits down again.*]

HEIN [*to* MARIE, *crossly and whiningly, softly*]. What am I to do? You see, don't you?

MARIE [*softly*]. I know: Spanish opening, queen's gambit —

HEIN [*leaving* MARIE *again to go centre; warding off, vehemently*]. No, no!

MARIE [*already back at the centre door*]. And do you know who else is here?

HEIN [*indignant*]. Who?

MARIE. Our Miss Vayner. Just arrived.

HEIN [*furious, shouting*]. What does *she* want?

MARIE [*with a shrug*]. She says she was impelled. By fear, I believe. Anyway, what odds? [*Exit through the centre door.*]

HEIN [*furious and vehement*]. No, no!

[*Again steps behind* EVA, *makes a grimace, and does n't know what to do with her.*]

EVA [*sitting quite still; after a slight pause, softly*]. Master.

HEIN [*carelessly*]. Yes?

EVA [*softly*]. May I make you a confession?

HEIN [*carelessly, conventionally*]. Surely.

EVA [*softly*]. This is the loveliest hour of my existence.

HEIN [*involuntarily falling into his affected gallant tone*]. Oh, little Eve!

EVA. Life can offer me nothing lovelier.

HEIN [*sits down on the table again, beside her*]. Really? [*He lays his hand lightly on her hair.*] You are a strange creature.

[*Startled by his own words, he withdraws his hand and makes a face.*]

EVA [*blissfully*]. How do you know that? — Oh, Gustav! You are the first man who has understood me!

[HEIN *merely nods mechanically, as he knew she would say this.*]

EVA [*takes his hand and presses it to her heart*]. Yes, Gustav, you have discovered me. You feel that I am different. Different from the others. And therefore you feel, too, what I must suffer. Out yonder in the dullness of the commonplace. I in my boundless soul-solitude.

HEIN [*nodding, having expected the word; registering it, so to speak*]. Soul-solitude.

EVA. Oh, Gustav. Sometimes when I sit at home, lost in quiet thoughts of you, there in my little music-room — the great black piano, a black portière concealing the door, black, with a figure of burning red hearts, and everything is so solemnly severe, no ornament, no picture save yours and the white-gleaming bust of Goethe.

HEIN [*with a gesture, as much as to say: Well, there! nodding*]. Goethe.

EVA. For you two are the guardian saints of my wretched life.

HEIN [*resigned, mechanically*]. Goethe and Frau von Stein.

EVA [*springs up with a cry*]. Gustav! How you guess my secret thoughts! [*Throws herself on his breast.*] That is what I have always longed for. [*In his arms.*] Heavens, what am I doing? Don't, Gustav, don't!

HEIN [*closing his arms about her; mechanically*]. My darling little Eve.

EVA [*shivering*]. What are you doing? Gustav, Gustav! Don't, don't!

HEIN [*resignedly*]. I must, I must.

CURTAIN

GIOCONDA

By GABRIELE D' ANNUNZIO

Translated by ARTHUR SYMONS

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FOR

ELEONORA DUSE

OF THE BEAUTIFUL HANDS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Lucio Settala
Lorenzo Gaddi
Cosimo Dalbo
Silvia Settala
Francesca Doni
Gioconda Dianti
Little Beata
La Sirenetta

At Florence, and on the coast of Pisa
at the present time

GIOCONDA

THE FIRST ACT

A quiet, foursquare room, in which the arrangement of everything indicates a search after a singular harmony, revealing the secret of a profound correspondence between the visible lines and the quality of the inhabiting mind that has chosen and loved them. All around seems to have been set in order by the hands of one of the thoughtful Graces. The aspect of the place evokes the image of a gentle and secluded life.

Two large windows are open on the garden beneath; through one of them can be seen, rising against the placid fields of the sky, the little hill of San Miniato, and its bright Basilica, and the convent, and the church of the Cronaca, "la Bella Villanella," the purest vessel of Franciscan simplicity.

There is a door opening into an inner room, another leading out. It is the afternoon. Through both windows enter the light, breath, and melody of April.

[Silvia Settala *and the old man* Lorenzo Gaddi *are seen on the threshold of the first door, side by side, as they both come into the fresh spring atmosphere.*]

Silvia Settala. Ah, blessed be life! Because I have always kept one hope alight, to-day I can bless life.

Lorenzo Gaddi. New life, dear Silvia, good brave soul, so good and so strong! The storm is over. Lucio has come back to you, full of gratitude and of tenderness, after all the evil. It is as if he were born again. Just now he had the eyes of a child.

Silvia Settala. All his goodness comes back to him when you are with him. When he calls you Maestro his voice becomes so affectionate that it must make your heart beat, the father's heart that you have for him.

Lorenzo Gaddi. Just now he had the same eyes that I saw in him when he came to me for the first time and I put the clay into his hands. His eyes were gentle and wondering; but from that moment his thumb was full of energy, a revealing thing. I have kept his first sketch. I thought of giving it to you on the day of your betrothal. I will give it to you in token of your new happiness.

Silvia Settala. Thanks, Maestro.

Lorenzo Gaddi. It is the head of a woman crowned with laurels. I remember there was rather a bad model there. As he worked, he hardly looked at her. Sometimes he seemed absorbed, sometimes anxious. There came out of his hands a sort of confused mask, through which one half saw I know not what heroic lineaments. For some moments he remained perplexed and discouraged, almost ashamed, at the sight of his work, not daring to turn to me. But suddenly, before letting it out of his hands, with a few touches he set a crown of laurel about the head. How it delighted me! He wanted to crown in the clay his own unaccomplished dream. The end of his day's work was an act of pride and of faith. I loved him from that instant, for that crown. I will give you the sketch. Perhaps, if you look at it closely, you will discover the ardent face of Sappho, that ideal figure which, only a few years later, he was able to bring to perfection, in a masterpiece.

Silvia Settala. [*Listening eagerly.*] Sit down, sit down, Maestro; stay a little longer, I beg of you. Sit here, by the window. Stay a few minutes longer. I have a thousand things to tell you, and I do not know how to tell you one of them. If I could overcome this continual tremor! I want you to understand. . . .

Lorenzo Gaddi. Is it joy that makes you tremble?

[*He sits down near the window.* Silvia, *leaning back against the*

window-sill, remains with her face turned towards him; her face is seen against the blue air, the little hill standing out in the background.]

SILVIA SETTALA. I do not know if it is joy. Sometimes everything that has been, all the evil, all the sorrow, and even the blood, and the wound, all melts away, vanishes, is wiped out into oblivion, is there no more. Sometimes everything that has been, all that horrible weight of memory, thickens and thickens, and grows compact and opaque and hard as a wall, like a rock that I shall never be able to surmount. Just now, when you spoke to me, when you offered me that unexpected gift, I thought: "Ah, now I shall take that gift in my hands, that morsel of clay into which he cast the first seed of his dreams, as into a fruitful soil; I shall take it in my hands, I shall go to him smiling, bearing intact the better part of his soul and of his life; and I shall not speak, and he will see in me the guardian of all his goods, and he will never go away from me any more, and we shall be young again, we shall be young again!" I thought that, and the thought and the act were mingled in one, with an incredible ease. Your words transfigured the world. Then, do you know, a breath passed, a vapour, the merest breathing, a mere nothing, and cast down everything, and destroyed everything, and the anxiety came back, and the dread, and the tremor. O April! [*Suddenly she turns to the light, drawing a deep breath.*] How this air troubles one, and yet how pure it is! All one's hope and despair pass in the wind with the dust of flowers. [*She leans out, calling.*] Beata! Beata!

LORENZO GADDI. Is the little one in the garden?

SILVIA SETTALA. There she is, she is running about between the rose-bushes. She is wild with delight. Beata! She has hidden herself behind a hedge, the rogue. She is laughing. Do you hear her laughing? Ah, when she laughs, I know the joy of flowers when they are filled to the brim with dew. That is how her fresh laughter fills my heart to overflowing.

LORENZO GADDI. Perhaps Lucio too hears her, and is consoled.

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Grave and trembling, leaning towards the Maestro, and taking his hands.*] You think then that he will really be healed of all his wounds? You think he will come back to me with all his soul? Did you feel that, when you saw him, when you talked with him? What did your heart say?

LORENZO GADDI. It seemed to me, just now, that he had the look of a man who begins to live over again with a new sense of life. He who has seen the face of death cannot but have seen in that instant the face of truth also. The bandage is taken off his eyes. He knows you now wholly.

SILVIA SETTALA. Maestro, Maestro, if you deceive yourself, if it is a vain hope, what will become of me? All my strength is worn out.

LORENZO GADDI. But what is there now to fear?

SILVIA SETTALA. He wanted to die; but *the other*, the other woman lives, and I know that she is implacable.

LORENZO GADDI. And what could she do now?

SILVIA SETTALA. She could do anything, if she were still loved.

LORENZO GADDI. Still loved? Beyond death?

SILVIA SETTALA. Beyond death. Ah, if you knew my anguish! It was for her that he wanted to die, in a moment of rage and of delirium. Think how he must have loved her, if the thought of me, if the thought of Beata, could not restrain him! Then, in that awful moment, he was her prey wholly; he was at the height of his fever, of his agony, and all the rest of the world was blotted out. Think how he must have loved her! [*The woman's voice is subdued but lacerating. The old man bows his head.*] Now, who can say what took place in him, after the blow, when the mist of death passed before his soul? Has he awakened without memory? Does he see an abyss between his life as it renews itself and the part of himself that he left behind in that mist? Or else, or else the image has risen again out of the depths,

and remains there, against the shadow, dominant, in indestructible relief? Tell me!

LORENZO GADDI. [*Perplexed.*] Who can say?

SILVIA SETTALA. [*In a sorrowful voice.*] Ah, now you yourself dare not console me any longer. Then, it is so? There is no help?

LORENZO GADDI. [*Taking her hands.*] No, no, Silvia. I meant: who can say what change is brought about in a nature like his by so mysterious a force? Everything in him speaks of some new good thing that has come to him. Look at him when he smiles. Just now, yonder, before you left him to come out with me, when he kissed those dear hands of yours, did you not feel that his whole heart melted into tenderness and humility?

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Her face slightly flushed.*] Yes, it is true.

LORENZO GADDI. [*Looking at her hands.*] Dear, dear hands, brave and beautiful, steadfast and beautiful! Your hands are extraordinarily beautiful, Silvia. If sorrow has too often set them together, it has sublimated them also, perfected them. They are perfect. Do you remember the woman of Verrocchio, the woman with the bunch of flowers, with the clustering hair? Ah, she is there! [*He perceives, from the look and smile of* SILVIA, *that there is a copy of the bust on a little cupboard in a corner of the room.*] So you have realised the relationship. Those two hands seem of the same blood as yours, they are of the same essence. They live — do they not? — with so luminous a life that the rest of the figure is darkened by them.

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Smiling.*] Oh, young, always young in soul!

LORENZO GADDI. When Lucio comes back to his work, he ought to model your hands the first day. I have a fragment of ancient marble, found in the Oricellari Gardens. I will give it to him, that he may chisel them in that, and lay them up like a votive offering.

SILVIA SETTALA. [*A cloud passing across her forehead.*] Do you think he will come back to his work soon? Will he wish to? Have you spoken of it with him?

LORENZO GADDI. Yes, just now, when you were not there.

SILVIA SETTALA. What did he say?

LORENZO GADDI. Vague, delicious things, a convalescent's dreams. I know them. I too was once ill. It seems to him now as if he has lost hold of his art, as if he had no longer any power over it, as if he had become a stranger to beauty. Then again it seems to him as if his thumbs had assumed a magic force, and that at a mere touch he can evoke forms out of the clay as easily as in dreams. He is somewhat uneasy about the disorder in which he fancies his studio was left, on the Mugnone yonder. He asked me to go and see. Have you the key?

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Anxiously.*] There is the caretaker.

LORENZO GADDI. How long is it since you were there?

SILVIA SETTALA. Since *this* began. I never had the courage to go back again. I feel as if I should see the stains of blood, and find traces of *her* everywhere. She is still mistress there. That place is still her domain.

LORENZO GADDI. The domain of a statue.

SILVIA SETTALA. No, no. Do you not know that she had a key? She came and went there as if it belonged to her. Ah, I have told you, I have told you; she lives, and is implacable.

LORENZO GADDI. Are you sure that she came back, after what happened?

SILVIA SETTALA. Sure. Her insolence has no bounds. She is without pity and without shame.

LORENZO GADDI. And he, Lucio, does he know?

SILVIA SETTALA. He does not know. But he will surely know it sooner or later. She will find a way of letting him know.

LORENZO GADDI. But why?

SILVIA SETTALA. Because she is implacable, because she will not relinquish her prey. [*A pause. The old man is silent. The woman's voice becomes harsh and tremulous.*] And the statue, the Sphinx, have you seen it?

LORENZO GADDI. [*After a moment's hesitation.*] Yes. I have seen it.

SILVIA SETTALA. Was it he who showed it to you?

LORENZO GADDI. Yes, one day last October. He had just finished it.

[*A pause.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. [*In a trembling voice, which almost fails her.*] It is wonderful, is it not? Tell me.

LORENZO GADDI. Yes, it is exquisitely beautiful.

SILVIA SETTALA. For eternity!

[*A pause, burdened with a thousand undefined and inevitable things.*]

THE VOICE OF BEATA. [*From the garden.*] Mamma! Mamma!

LORENZO GADDI. The child is calling you.

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Starting up, and leaning out of the window.*] Beata! Ah, there she is; my sister Francesca is coming across the garden; she is coming here with Cosimo Dalbo. Do you know? Cosimo has returned from Cairo; he arrived at Florence last night. Lucio will be delighted to see him.

LORENZO GADDI. [*Rising to go.*] Good-bye, then, dear Silvia: I shall see you perhaps to-morrow.

SILVIA SETTALA. Stay a little longer. My sister would like to see you.

LORENZO GADDI. I must go. I am late now.

SILVIA SETTALA. When shall I have the gift you promised me?

LORENZO GADDI. Perhaps to-morrow.

SILVIA SETTALA. No perhaps, no perhaps. I shall expect you. You must come here often, every day. Your presence does us good. Do not forsake me. I trust in you, Maestro. Remember that a menace is still hanging over my head.

LORENZO GADDI. Do not fear. Keep up your courage!

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Moving towards the door.*] Here is Francesca.

[FRANCESCA DONI *enters, goes up to her sister, and embraces her.* COSIMO DALBO, *who follows her, shakes hands with* LORENZO GADDI, *who is on the point of going out.*]

FRANCESCA DONI. Do you see whom I am bringing? We met outside the gate. How are you, Maestro? Are you going just as I come in?

[*She shakes hands with the old man.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Holding out her hand cordially.*] Welcome back, Dalbo. We were expecting you. Lucio is impatient to see you.

COSIMO DALBO. [*With affectionate solicitude.*] How is he now? Is he up? Is he quite well?

SILVIA SETTALA. He is convalescent; still a little weak; but getting stronger every day. The wound is entirely closed. You will see him in a minute. The doctor is with him; I will go and tell him you are here. It will be a great delight for him. He has asked after you several times to-day. He is impatient to see you. [*She turns to* LORENZO GADDI.] To-morrow, then.

[*She goes out with a light and rapid step. The sister, the* MAESTRO, *and the friend follow her with their eyes.*]

FRANCESCA DONI. [*With a kindly smile.*] Poor Silvia! For the last few days, she seems as if she had wings. When I look at her sometimes, it seems to me as if she is going to take flight towards happiness. And no one deserves happiness more; is it not true, Maestro? You know her.

LORENZO GADDI. Yes, she is really as your sisterly eyes see her. She comes winged out of her martyrdom. There is a sort of incessant quiver in her. I felt it just now, when she stood near me. Truly she is in a state of grace. There is no height to which she could not attain. Lucio has in his hands a life of flame, an infinite force.

FRANCESCA DONI. You were with him some time to-day.

LORENZO GADDI. Yes, hours.

FRANCESCA DONI. How was he?

LORENZO GADDI. Running over with sweetness, and a little bewildered. You will see him presently, Dalbo. His sensitiveness is a danger. Those who love him can do him much good and much harm. A word agitates and convulses him. Watch over all your words, you who love him. Good-bye. I must go. [*Takes leave of them both.*]

FRANCESCA DONI. Good-bye, Maestro. Perhaps we shall see you here again tomorrow. I hope so. You have a horror of my stairs! [*She accompanies the old man to the door; then returns to the friend.*] What a fire of intelligence and of goodness, in that old man! When he comes into a room he seems to bring comfort to all. The sad rejoice and the merry become fervent.

COSIMO DALBO. He inspires the soul; he belongs to the noblest race of mankind. His work is a continual exaltation of life; it is the continual force of communicating a spark, whether to his statues or to the creatures whom he meets by the way. Lorenzo Gaddi seems to me to deserve a far higher fame than he receives from his contemporaries.

FRANCESCA DONI. It is true, it is true. If you knew what energy and what delicacy he showed, in that horrible affair! When the thing happened, my sister was not there; she was with our mother, at Pisa, with Beata. The thing happened in the studio, there, on the Mugnone, in the evening. Only the caretaker heard the report. When he discovered the truth, he ran to tell Lorenzo Gaddi before any one else. In the anguish and horror of that winter evening, in the midst of all the confusion and uncertainty, he alone never lost his presence of mind, nor had a single instant's hesitation. He preserved a strange lucidity, by which every one was dominated. He made every arrangement: all obeyed him. It was he who had poor Lucio brought to the house here, half dead. The doctor despaired of saving him. He alone declared, with an obstinate faith: "No, he will not die, he will not die, he cannot die." I believed him. Ah, what a heroic night, Dalbo. And then the arrival of Silvia, his telling her himself, forbidding her to enter the room where a mere breath might have quenched that glimmer of life: and her strength, her incredible endurance under watching and waiting for whole weeks, the proud and silent vigilance with which she guarded the threshold as if to hinder the coming of death!

COSIMO DALBO. And I was far away, unconscious of all, blissfully idle in a boat on the Nile! Yet I had a kind of presentiment, before leaving. That was why I tried every means to persuade Lucio to go with me, as we had often dreamed of doing together. He had then finished his statue; and I thought that his liberty was in that wonderful marble. He said, "Not yet!" And a few months after he was seeking it in death. Ah, if I had not gone away, if I had stayed by him, if I had been more faithful, if I had known how to defend him against the enemy, nothing would have happened.

FRANCESCA DONI. There is nothing to regret if so much good can come out of so much evil. Who knows in what sadness of despair my sister might have perished, if the violence of that act had not suddenly reunited her to Lucio! But do not think that the enemy has laid down arms. She has not abandoned the field.

COSIMO DALBO. Who? Gioconda Dianti?

FRANCESCA DONI. [*Motioning to him to be silent, and lowering her voice.*] Do not say that name!

]LUCIO SETTALA *appears on the threshold of the door, leaning on the arm of* SILVIA; *he is pale and thin, and his eyes look extraordinarily large with suffering; a faint, sweet smile gives refinement to a voluptuous mouth.*]

LUCIO SETTALA. Cosimo!

COSIMO DALBO. [*Turning and running up to him.*] Oh, Lucio, dear, dear friend! [*He puts his arms about the convalescent, while* SILVIA *moves aside, nearer to her sister, and goes out with her, slowly, pausing for a moment to look at her husband before going.*] You are well again, are you not? You are not suffering now? I find you a little pale, a little thin, but not so very much. You look as I have seen you sometimes after a period of feverish work, when you have been with your clay for twelve hours a day, consumed with that fire. Do you remember?

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Looking confusedly about him, to see if* SILVIA *is still in the room.*] Yes, yes.

COSIMO DALBO. Then too your eyes looked larger. . . .

LUCIO SETTALA. [*With an indefinable, almost childish restlessness.*] And Silvia? Where is Silvia gone? Was n't she here with Francesca?

COSIMO DALBO. They have left us alone.

LUCIO SETTALA. Why? She thinks, perhaps. . . . No, I have nothing to tell you, I know nothing now any more. Perhaps you know. For me, no; I don't remember. I don't want to remember. Tell me about yourself! Tell me about yourself! Is the desert beautiful?

[*He speaks in a singular way, as if in a dream, with a mixture of agitation and stupor.*]

COSIMO DALBO. I will tell you. But you must not tire yourself. I will tell you all my pilgrimage; I will come here every day, if I may; I will stay with you as long as you like, only not long enough to tire you. Sit here.

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Smiling.*] Do you think I am so feeble?

COSIMO DALBO. No, you are all right now, but it is better for you not to tire yourself. Sit here. [*He makes him sit down near the window, and looks out at the hill clearly outlined against the April sky.*] Ah, my dear friend, I have seen marvellous things with these eyes, and they have drunk light in comparison with which this seems ashen; but, when I see again a simple line like that (look at San Miniato!) I seem to find myself again, after an interval of wandering. Look at that dear hill! The pyramid of Cheops does not make one forget the Bella Villanella; and more than once, in the gardens of Koubbeh and Gizeh, hives of honey, chewing a grain of resin, I thought of a slim Tuscan cypress on the edge of a narrow grove of olives.

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Half closing his eyelids under the breath of Spring.*] It is good to be here, is it not? There is an odour of violets. Perhaps there is a bunch of violets in the room. Silvia puts them everywhere, even under my pillow.

COSIMO DALBO. Do you know, I have brought you the violets of the desert, between the pages of a Koran. I gathered them in the garden of a Persian monastery, near the Thebaid, on the side of the Mokattam, on an eminence of sand. There, in a cavern dug out of the mountain, covered with carpets and cushions, the monks offer their visitors a tea with a special flavour, Arab tea, perfumed with violets.

LUCIO SETTALA. And you have brought them for me, buried in a book! How happy you were to be able to gather them, so far away; and I might have been with you.

COSIMO DALBO. There, all was oblivion. I went up by a long, straight stone staircase, that leads from the foot of the mountain to the gate of the Bectaschiti. The desert was all about; vast, hallucinating dryness, in which there was no life but the stirring of wind and the quivering of heat. I could only distinguish here and there, between the sand-heaps, the white stones of Arab cemeteries. I heard the crying of hawks high up in the sky. I saw on the Nile multitudes of boats with great lateen sails, white, slow, going on, going on, like snow-flakes. And little by little I was caught up into an ecstasy that you can never have known, the ecstasy of light.

LUCIO SETTALA. [*In a far-off voice.*] And I might have been with you, loitering, forgetting, dreaming, drunk with light. You went down the Nile, did you not? in an ancient boat loaded with wine-skins, sacks, and cages. You landed on an island towards evening; you were dressed in white serge; you were thirsty; you drank at a spring; you walked barefoot upon flowers; and the odour was so strong that you seemed to have forgotten hunger. Ah, I thought, I felt, these things from my pillow. And I followed you through the desert, when the fever was at its height; through a desert of red sand, sown with glittering stones that splintered crackling like twigs in the fire. [*A pause. He leans forward a little, saying in a clear voice and with open eyes:*] And the Sphinx?

COSIMO DALBO. I saw it first at night, by the light of stars, sunken into the sand that still keeps the violent imprint of whirlwinds. The face and the croup rose out of that quieted storm, all that was human and all that was bestial in it. The

face, whose mutilations were hidden by the shadow, seemed to me at that moment exquisitely beautiful: calm, august, cerulean as the night, almost meek. There is nothing in the world, Lucio, so much alone as that; but my mind was, as it were, before multitudes who had slept, and on whose eyelashes the dew had fallen. Then I saw it again by day. The face was bestial, like the croup; the nose and throat were eaten away; the droppings of birds fouled the fillets. It was the heavy wingless monster imagined by the excavators of tombs, by the embalmers of corpses. And I saw, in the sun before me, your Sphinx, pure and imperious, with wings imprisoned alive in the shoulders.

LUCIO SETTALA. [*With a sudden emotion.*] My statue? You mean my statue? You saw it, ah, yes, before you went; and you found it beautiful. [*He looks uneasily towards the door, fearing* SILVIA *might hear him, and lowers his voice.*] You found it beautiful?

COSIMO DALBO. Exquisitely beautiful.

[LUCIO *covers his eyes with both hands and remains for some seconds as if trying to evoke a vision in the darkness.*]

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Uncovering his eyes.*] I no longer see it. It escapes me. It comes and goes in a breath, confusedly. If I had it here before me now it would seem new to me: I should cry out. And yet I carved it, with these hands! [*He looks at his thin, sensitive hands. His agitation increases.*] I don't know. I don't know. In the beginning of my fever, when I still had the bullet in my flesh, and the continual murmuring of death in my lost soul, I saw it standing at the foot of the bed, lit like a torch, as if I myself had moulded it out of some incandescent material. So for many days and nights I saw it through my eyelids. It grew brighter as my fever increased. When my pulse burned it turned to flame. It was as if all the blood shed at its feet had gone up into it and boiled up in it . . .

COSIMO DALBO. [*Uneasily, looking towards the door, with the same fear.*] Lucio, Lucio, you said just now that you knew nothing now, that you did not want to remember anything. Lucio!

[*He gently shakes his friend, who remains rigid.*]

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Recollecting himself.*] Do not fear. I have left it all far, far behind me, at the bottom of the sea. The statue was drowned too, with all the rest, after the shipwreck. That is why I can no longer see it except confusedly, as if through deep water.

COSIMO DALBO. It alone shall be saved, to live for ever; and so much sorrow shall not have been suffered in vain, so much evil shall not have been useless, if one thing so beautiful remains over, to be added to the ornament of life.

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Smiling again with his faint smile and speaking in his far-off voice.*] It is true. I sometimes think of the fate of one whose ship and all that was in it went down in a storm. On a day as calm as this, he took a boat and a net, and he returned to the place of the shipwreck, hoping to draw something up out of the depths. And, after much labour, he drew on shore a statue. And the statue was so beautiful that he wept for joy to see it again; and he sat down on the seashore to gaze upon it, and was content with that gain, and would seek after nothing more: "well, I forget the rest!" [*He rises hastily.*] Why has not Silvia come back? [*He listens.*] Who is laughing? Ah, it is Beata in the garden. Look; San Miniato is all gold; it lightens. Is there a more glorious light at Thebes?

COSIMO DALBO. The ecstasy of light! I told you: you can know it nowhere else. Circles, garlands, wheels, roses of splendour, innumerable sparkles. . . . The verses of the *Paradiso* recur to one's mind. Only Dante has found dazzling words. In certain hours the Nile becomes the flood of topazes, the "marvellous gulf." Like a stone in water, a gesture in the air arouses thousands and thousands of waves. All things swim in light; all the leaves drip with it. The women, who pass along the stream with full wine-skins, actually flame like the angelic host in the song, "distinct in light and form."

[LUCIO, *catching sight of a bunch of*

violets on the table, takes them up and buries his face in them, to drink in their odour.]

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Still holding the violets to his nostrils and half-closing his eyes with delight.*] Are the women of the Nile beautiful?

COSIMO DALBO. Some, in youth, have bodies of marvellous purity and elegance. You, who like firm and active muscles, a certain acerbity in form, long, nervous legs, would find incomparable models there. How often have I thought of you! In the island of Elephantina I had a little friend of fourteen; a girl golden as a date, thin, lithe, firm, with strong, arched loins, straight, strong legs, perfect knees; a very rare thing, as you know. In all that hard slenderness, which gave one the impression of a javelin, sharp and precise, three things delighted me with their infinitely soft grace: the mouth, the shadow of the eyelashes, the tips of the fingers. She braided her hair with fingers rosy-tipped like petals dyed with purple: and to watch her in that act, on the threshold of her white house, was the delight of my mornings. I should like to have taken her away with the statuettes, the scarabæi, the cloths, the tobacco, the scents, the weapons. I have brought you a beautiful bow that I bought at Assouan, and that is a little like her.

LUCIO SETTALA. [*With a slight perturbation, throwing back his head.*] She must have been a delicious creature!

COSIMO DALBO. Delicious and harmless. She was like a beautiful bow, but her arrows were without venom.

LUCIO SETTALA. You loved her?

COSIMO DALBO. As I love my horse and my dogs.

LUCIO SETTALA. Ah, you were happy there; your life was light and easy. It must have been the island of Elephantina where I saw you come on shore, in a dream. I might have been with you! But I will go, I will leave here. Do you not long to return? I will have a white house on the Nile; I will make my statues with the slime of the river, and set them up in that light of yours that will turn them to gold for me. Silvia! Silvia! [*He calls towards the door as if seized by a sudden impatience, an anxious will to live.*] Would it be too late?

COSIMO DALBO. It is too late. The great heats are coming on.

LUCIO SETTALA. What does it matter? I love summer heat, sultriness even. All the pomegranates will be in flower in the gardens, and when it rains they will see those large, warm drops that make the earth sigh for pleasure.

COSIMO DALBO. But the Khamsin? when all the desert rises up against the sun?

[SILVIA *appears on the threshold, smiling, her whole being visibly animated. She has changed her gown; she is dressed in a clearer, more spring-like colour; and she carries in her hands a bunch of fresh roses.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. What do you say, Dalbo, against the sun? Did you call, Lucio?

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Re-taken by a kind of restless timidity, as of a man who feels the need of self-abandonment, to which he dares not give way.*] Yes, I called you, because I thought you were never coming back. Cosimo was telling me of so many beautiful things. I wanted you to hear them too. [*He looks at his wife with surprise in his eyes, as if he discovered a new charm in her.*] Were you going out?

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Blushing slightly.*] Ah, you are looking at my gown. I put it on to see how it looked, while Francesca was there. My sister sends her apologies to you both for having gone without coming to say good-bye. She was in a hurry: her children were waiting for her. She hopes, Dalbo, that you will come and see her soon. [*She puts the roses on a table.*] Will you dine with us to-night?

COSIMO DALBO. Thanks. I cannot to-night. My mother expects me.

SILVIA SETTALA. Naturally. To-morrow, then?

COSIMO DALBO. To-morrow. I will bring my presents for you, Lucio.

LUCIO SETTALA. [*With childish curiosity.*] Yes, yes, bring them, bring them.

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Smiling mysteriously.*] I too am to have a present to-morrow.

LUCIO SETTALA. From whom?

SILVIA SETTALA. From the Maestro.

LUCIO SETTALA. What?

SILVIA SETTALA. You shall see.

LUCIO SETTALA. [*With a joyous movement.*] You too shall see all the beautiful things that Cosimo has brought me: cloths, scents, weapons, scarabæi. . . .

COSIMO DALBO. Amulets against every evil, talismans for happiness. On Gebel-el-Tair, in a Coptic convent, I found the most powerful of scarabæi. The monk told me a long story of a cenobite who, at the time of the first persecution, took refuge in a vault, and found a mummy there, and took it out of its swathings of balm, and restored it to life, and the resuscitated mummy, with its painted lips, told him the story of its old life, which had been one whole tissue of happiness. In the end, as the cenobite wished to convert it, it preferred to lie down again in its embalmings; but first it gave him the guardian scarabæus. To tell you what use was made of it by the solitary, and through what vicissitudes it passed across the centuries into the hands of the good Copt, would take too long. Certainly, a more powerful one is not in all Egypt. Here it is: I offer it to you, I offer it to you both.

[*He hands the amulet to* SILVIA, *who examines it carefully and then passes it to* LUCIO, *with a sudden light in her eyes.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. How blue it is. It is brighter than a turquoise. Look.

COSIMO DALBO. The Copt said to me: "Small as a gem, great as a destiny!" [LUCIO *turns the mystic stone between his fingers, which tremble a little, fumblingly.*] Good-bye then: to-morrow! Good night.

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Picking a rose out of the bunch and offering it to him.*] Here is a fresh rose in exchange for the amulet. Take it to your mother.

COSIMO DALBO. Thanks. To-morrow!

[*He salutes them again and goes out.*]

LUCIO SETTALA *smiles timidly, turning the scarabæus between his fingers, while* SILVIA *puts the roses in a vase. Both, in the silence, hear the beating of their anxious hearts. The setting sun gilds the room. In the square of the window is seen the pallid sky; San Miniato shines on the height; the air is soft, without a breath of wind.*

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Looking into the air, and listening anxiously.*] There is a bee in the room.

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Raising her head.*] A bee?

LUCIO SETTALA. Yes. Don't you hear it? [*Both listen to the murmur.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. You are right.

LUCIO SETTALA. Perhaps you brought it in with the roses.

SILVIA SETTALA. Beata picked these.

LUCIO SETTALA. I heard her laughing, just now, down in the garden.

SILVIA SETTALA. How pleased she is to be home again!

LUCIO SETTALA. It was a good thing to send her away then.

SILVIA SETTALA. She is stronger and lovelier for having breathed the odour of the pines. How good the spring must be at Bocca d' Arno! Would you not like to go there for a while?

LUCIO SETTALA. There, by the sea. . . . Would you like it?

[*Their voices are altered by a slight tremor.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. It has always been a dream of mine to pass one spring there.

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Choked with emotion.*] Your dream is mine, Silvia.

[*The amulet falls from his hands.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Stooping quickly to pick it up.*] Ah, you have let it fall! They would say it is a bad omen. See. I put it on Beata's head. "Small as a gem, great as a destiny!"

[*She lays the amulet delicately upon the roses.*]

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Holding out his hands to her, as if imploring.*] Silvia! Silvia!

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Running to him.*] Do you feel ill? You look paler. Ah, you have tired yourself too much to-day, you are worn out. Sit here, come. Will you sip some of this cordial? Do you feel as if you are going to faint? Tell me!

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Taking her hands with an outburst of love.*] No, no, Silvia; I never felt so well. You, you sit down, sit here; and I at your feet, at last, with all my soul, to adore you, to adore you! [*She sinks back on the divan and he falls on his knees before her. She is convulsed and trembling, and lays her hand on his lips, as if to keep him from speaking. Breath and words pass between her fingers.*] At last! It was like a flood coming from far off, a flood of all the beautiful things and all the good things that you have poured out on my life since you began to love me; and my heart overflowed, ah, overflowed so that I staggered under the weight of it, and fainted and died of the pain and the sweetness of it, because I dared not say. . . .

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Her face white, her voice almost extinct.*] No more, say no more!

LUCIO SETTALA. Hear me, hear me! All the sorrows that you have suffered, the wounds that you have received without a cry, the tears that you have hidden lest I should have shame and remorse, the smiles with which you have veiled your agonies, your infinite pity for my wanderings, your invincible courage in the face of death, your hard fight for my life, your hope always alight beside my bed, your watches, cares, continual tremors, expectation, silence, joy, all that is deep, all that is sweet and heroic in you, I know it all, I feel it all, dear soul; and, if violence is enough to break a yoke, if blood is enough for redemption (oh, let me speak!) I bless the evening and the hour that brought me dying into this house of your martyrdom and of your faith to receive once more at your hands, these divine hands that tremble, the gift of life.

[*He presses his convulsed mouth against the palms of her hands, and she gazes at him through the tears that moisten her eyelids, transfigured with unexpected happiness.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. [*In a faint and broken voice.*] No more, say no more! My heart cannot bear it. You suffocate me with joy. I longed for one word from you, only one, no more; and all at once you flood me with love, you fill up every vein, you raise me to the other side of hope, you outpass my dreams, you give me happiness beyond all expectation. Ah, what did you say of my sorrows? What is sorrow endured, what is silence constrained, what is a tear, what is a smile, now, in the face of this flood that bears me away? I feel as if by-and-by, for you, for you, I shall be sorry not to have suffered more. Perhaps I have not reached the depths of sorrow, but I know that I have reached the height of happiness. [*She blindly caresses his head, as it lies on her knees.*] Rise, rise! Come nearer to my heart, rest on me, give way to my tenderness, press my hands on your eyelids, be silent, dream, call back the deep forces of your life. Ah, it is not me alone that you must love, not me alone, but the love I have for you: love my love! I am not beautiful, I am not worthy of your eyes, I am a humble creature in the shadow; but my love is wonderful, it is on high, on high, it is alone, it is sure as the day, it is stronger than death, it can work miracles; it shall give you all that you ask. You can ask more than you have ever hoped. [*She draws him to her heart, raising his head. His eyes are closed, his lips tight set, he is as pale as death, drunk and exhausted with emotion.*] Rise, rise! Come nearer to my heart; rest on me. Do you not feel that you can give yourself up to me? that nothing in the world is surer than my breast? that you can find it always? Ah, I have sometimes thought that this certitude might intoxicate you like glory. [*He kneels before her with uplifted face; she with both hands pushes back the hair to uncover his whole forehead.*] Beautiful, strong forehead, sealed and blessed! May all the germs of spring awaken in your new thoughts!

[*Trembling she presses her lips to his forehead. Silently he stretches out his arms towards the suppliant. The sunset is like a dawn.*]

THE SECOND ACT

The same room, the same hour of the day. A cloudy and changing sky is seen through the window.

Cosimo Dalbo *is seated by a table, on which he rests his elbows, putting his hand to his forehead, grave and thoughtful.* Lucio Settala *is on foot, restless and agitated; he moves about the room uncertainly, giving way to the anguish that oppresses him.*

Lucio Settala. Yes, I am going to tell you. Why should I hide the truth? From you! I have had a letter, I have opened it, read it.

Cosimo Dalbo. From Gioconda?

Lucio Settala. From her.

Cosimo Dalbo. A love letter?

Lucio Settala. It burnt my fingers.

Cosimo Dalbo. Well? [*He hesitates. In a voice changed by emotion.*] You still love her?

Lucio Settala. [*With a shudder of dread.*] No, no, no.

Cosimo Dalbo. [*Looking into the depths of his eyes.*] You no longer love her?

Lucio Settala. [*Entreatingly.*] Oh, do not torture me. I suffer.

Cosimo Dalbo. But what is it then that distresses you? [*A pause.*]

Lucio Settala. Every day, at an hour that I know, she waits for me, there, at the foot of the statue, alone.

[*Another pause. The two men seem as if they saw before them something strong and living, a Will, evoked by those brief words.*]

Cosimo Dalbo. She waits for you? Where? In your studio? How could she get in?

Lucio Settala. She has a key: the key of that time.

Cosimo Dalbo. She waits for you! She thinks, she desires, then, that you should still belong to her?

Lucio Settala. You have said it.

Cosimo Dalbo. And what shall you do?

Lucio Settala. What shall I do? [*A pause.*]

Cosimo Dalbo. You vibrate like a flame.

Lucio Settala. I suffer.

Cosimo Dalbo. You are burning.

Lucio Settala. [*Vehemently.*] No.

Cosimo Dalbo. Listen. She is terrible. One cannot fight against her save at a distance. That is why I wanted to take you with me, across the sea. You preferred death to the sea. Another (you know who, and your heart bleeds for her) has saved you from death. And now you can live only for her.

Lucio Settala. It is true.

Cosimo Dalbo. You must go away, fly from her.

Lucio Settala. For always?

Cosimo Dalbo. For some time.

Lucio Settala. She will wait for me.

Cosimo Dalbo. You will be stronger.

Lucio Settala. Her power will have increased. She will have more profoundly impregnated with herself the place that is dear to me for the work's sake that was achieved there. I shall see her from far off, like the guardian of a statue into which I put the most vivid breath of my soul.

Cosimo Dalbo. You love her.

Lucio Settala. [*Despairingly.*] No. I do not love her. But think: she will always be the stronger: she knows what conquers and what binds me; she is armed with a fascination from which I cannot free my soul except by tearing her out of my heart. Must I try again?

Cosimo Dalbo. Ah, you are raving!

Lucio Settala. The place where I have dreamed, where I have worked, where I have wept with joy, where I have cried on glory, where I have seen death, is her conquest. She knows that I cannot keep away from it or renounce it, that the most precious part of my substance is diffused there: and she waits for me, certain.

Cosimo Dalbo. Does she then exercise an inviolable right there? Can no one forbid her entrance?

Lucio Settala. [*With a profound emotion.*] Turn her out?

Cosimo Dalbo. No: but there may be another way, less hard, the simplest way: ask her for the key which she has no right to retain.

Lucio Settala. And who is to ask her for it?

COSIMO DALBO. Any one of us, I myself, respectfully, in the name of necessity.

LUCIO SETTALA. She would refuse, she would look upon you as a stranger.

COSIMO DALBO. You yourself then.

LUCIO SETTALA. I? I face her?

COSIMO DALBO. No, write to her.

[*A pause.*]

LUCIO SETTALA. [*With the accent of absolute impossibility.*] I cannot. And it would all be in vain.

COSIMO DALBO. But there is another way: leave that house, clear out everything, take everything somewhere else. You will thus avoid the intolerable sadness of memory. How is it you do not realise that change is necessary, if your life is to renew itself, so that the companion you have found again may help you in your work? Would you have her sit where the other had been? Would you have her always see before her eyes the vision of that horrible evening?

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Smiling, disheartened and bitter.*] Well, yes, you are right: we will leave here, we will go somewhere else, we will choose a beautiful solitary place, we will shake off the dust from old things, open all the windows, let in the pure air, take a heap of clay, a block of marble, set up a monument to liberty. [*He breaks off. His voice becomes singularly calm.*] One morning, Gioconda will knock at the new door; I shall open to her: she will come in: without surprise I shall say to her, "Welcome." [*Unable to restrain his bitterness.*] Ah, but you are like a child! The whole thing seems to you no more than a key. Call in a locksmith, change the lock, and I am saved.

COSIMO DALBO. [*Tenderly and sadly.*] Do not be angry. At first I thought you had simply to rid yourself of an intruder. Now I see that my advice was childish.

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Imploringly.*] Cosimo, my friend, do understand me!

COSIMO DALBO. I understand, but you deny it.

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Again carried away by excitement.*] I deny nothing. I deny nothing. Would you have me cry to you that I love her? [*Looks about him in an aimless bewilderment. Passes his hand across his forehead with an air of suffering. Lowers his voice.*] You should have let me die. Think, if I who was intoxicated with life, if I who was frantic with strength and pride, if I wanted to die, be sure I knew there was an insuperable necessity for it. Not being able to live either with or without her, I resolved to quit the world. Think: I who looked on the world as my garden, and had every lust after every beauty! Be sure, then, I knew there was an insuperable necessity, an iron destiny. You should have let me die.

COSIMO DALBO. You have forgotten the divine miracle, cruelly.

LUCIO SETTALA. I am not cruel. Because I was in horror of that cruelty towards which the violence of evil drew me, because I would not trample upon a more than human virtue, because I could not endure the sweetness of a little unconscious voice questioning me, because I wished to keep myself from the worst of all (do you understand?) I made my resolve. And because I am in horror of beginning over again, therefore I hate myself; because to-day I am like one who has taken a narcotic in despair, and who wakes up again, after a sound sleep, and finds the same old despair by his bedside.

COSIMO DALBO. The same! And your first words are still in my ears: "I know nothing now, I don't remember, I don't want to remember any more." You seemed as if you had forgotten all, as if you reached out after some new good thing. The sound of your voice is still in my ears as you called to Beata's mother, getting up hurriedly, impatient, as if with an ardour that permits no delay. I still see the way you looked at her, when she entered, tremulous as hope. And, surely, that night you must needs have knelt to her, and she must have wept over you, and both together must have felt the goodness of life.

LUCIO SETTALA. Yes, yes, it was indeed so: adoration! All my soul was prostrate at her feet, knowing all that is divine in her, with an intoxication of humility, with a fervour of unspeakable gratitude. I was carried away. You spoke of the ecstasy

of light: I experienced it in that moment. Every stain was wiped out, every shadow cleared away. Life had a new splendour. I thought I was saved for ever.

[*He breaks off.*]

COSIMO DALBO. But then?

LUCIO SETTALA. Then I knew that there was something else that must be abolished in me: the force that flows incessantly to my fingers, as if to reproduce.

COSIMO DALBO. What do you mean?

LUCIO SETTALA. I mean that I should perhaps have been saved, if I had forgotten art also. Those days, there in my bed, as I looked at my feeble hands, it seemed to me incredible that I should ever create again; it seemed to me as if I had lost all my power. I felt completely estranged from the world of form in which I had lived . . . *before I died.* I thought: "Lucio Settala, the sculptor, is dead." And I dreamt of becoming the gardener of a little garden. [*He sits down, as if quieted, half closing his eyes, with a weary air, a scarcely visible smile of irony.*] To prune roses, water them, pick the caterpillars off them, clip the box with shears, train the ivy up the walls, in a little garden sloping to the waters of oblivion; and not regret that one has left on the other shore a glorious park, populous with laurels, and cypresses, and myrtles, and marbles, and dreams. You see me there, happy, with shining shears, dressed in twill.

COSIMO DALBO. I do not see you.

LUCIO SETTALA. It is a pity, my friend.

COSIMO DALBO. But who forbids your return to the great park? You can return to it by the alley of cypresses, and find your tutelar genius at the end of the way.

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Leaping to his feet, like one who again loses self-control.*] Tutelar! Ah, you seem to heap one word on another, like bandages on lint, for fear of feeling the pulsation of life. Have you ever put your finger on an open artery, a torn tendon?

COSIMO DALBO. Lucio, your anger grows on you every minute. You have something wry and acrid, a kind of exasperation which hinders you from being just. You are not yet out of convalescence, you are not yet well. A sudden shock has come to disturb the placid work that nature was carrying out in you. Your newborn strength festers. If my advice were worth anything, I would bid you go at once to Bocca d' Arno, as you proposed. There, between the woods and the sea, you will find once more a little calm, and you will think over what your attitude must be; and you will find too the goodness that will give you light.

LUCIO SETTALA. Goodness! goodness! Do you think then that light must come from goodness and not from that profound instinct which turns and hurries my spirit towards the most glorious images of life? I was born to make statues. When a material form has gone out of my hands with the imprint of beauty, the office assigned to me by nature is fulfilled. I have not exceeded my own law, whether or not I have exceeded the laws of right. Is it not really true? Do you admit it?

COSIMO DALBO. Proceed.

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Lowering his voice.*] The sport of illusion has mated me with a creature who was never meant for me. She is a soul of inestimable price, before whom I kneel and worship. But I am not a sculptor of souls. She was not meant for me. When the other appeared before me, I thought of all the blocks of marble hidden in the caves of far mountains, that I might arrest in each of them one of her motions.

COSIMO DALBO. But now you have obeyed the commandment of Nature, in creating your masterpiece. When I saw your statue I thought that you were free from her. You have perpetuated a frail sample of the species in an ideal and indestructible type. Are you not therefore satisfied?

LUCIO SETTALA. [*More excitedly.*] A thousand statues, not one! She is always diverse, like a cloud that from instant to instant seems changed without your seeing it change. Every motion of her body destroys one harmony and creates another yet more beautiful. You implore her to stay, to remain motionless; and across all her immobility there passes a torrent of obscure forces, as thoughts pass in the eyes. Do you understand? do you understand?

The life of the eyes is the look, that indefinable thing, more expressive than any word, than any sound, infinitely deep and yet instantaneous as a breath, swifter than a flash, innumerable, omnipotent: in a word, *the look*. Now imagine the life of the look diffused over all her body. Do you understand? The quiver of an eyelid transfigures a human face and expresses an immensity of joy or sorrow. The eyelashes of the creature whom you love are lowered: the shadow encircles you as the waters encircle an island: they are raised: the flame of summer burns up the world. Another quiver: your soul dissolves like a drop of water; another: you are lord of the universe. Imagine that mystery over all her body! Imagine through all her limbs, from the forehead to the sole of the foot, that flash of lightning, like life! Can one chisel the look? The ancients made their statues blind. Now, imagine, her whole body is like the look. [*A pause. He looks about him suspiciously, in fear of being heard. He comes nearer to his friend, who listens with increasing emotion.*] I have told you: a thousand statues, not one. Her beauty lives in every block of marble. I felt this, with an anxiety made up of regret and fervour, one day at Carrara, when she was with me, and we saw, coming down the mountain-side, those great oxen with yokes, drawing the marble in waggons. An aspect of her perfection was enclosed for me in each of those formless masses. It seemed to me as if there went out from her towards the raw material a thousand life-giving sparks, as from a shaken torch. We had to choose a block. I remember, it was a calm day. The marble shone in the sun like the eternal snows. We heard from time to time the rumbling of the mines that tore asunder the bowels of the silent mountain. I shall never forget that hour, though I were to die over again. She went into the midst of that concourse of white cubes, stopping before each. She leant over, observed the grain attentively, seemed to explore the inner veins, hesitated, smiled, passed on. To my eyes her garments were no covering. There was a sort of divine affinity between her flesh and the marble that she leant over until her breath touched it. A confused aspiration seemed to rise to her from that inert whiteness. The wind, the sun, the grandeur of the mountains, the long lines of yoked oxen, and the ancient curve of the yokes, and the creaking of the waggons, and the cloud that rose from the Tirreno, and the lofty flight of an eagle, everything I saw exalted my spirit into a limitless poetry, intoxicated as with a dream that I had never equalled. Ah, Cosimo, Cosimo, I have dared to throw away a life on which there gleams the glory of such a memory. When she laid her hand on the marble that she had chosen, and turning to me said "This," all the mountains, from root to summit, breathed beauty. [*An extraordinary fervour warms his voice and quickens his gestures. The listener is carried away by it, and makes no sign.*] Ah, now you understand! You will never ask me again if I am satisfied. Now you know how furious must be my impatience when I think that she is there now, alone, at the foot of the Sphinx, awaiting me. Think, the statue rises above her, immobile, immutable, in its immunity from all sorrow; and she is there, grieving, and her life is ebbing away, and something of her perishes continually. Delay is death. But you do not know, you do not know . . .

[*He speaks as if about to confide a secret.*]

COSIMO DALBO. What?

LUCIO SETTALA. You do not know that I had begun another statue?

COSIMO DALBO. Another?

LUCIO SETTALA. Yes, it was left unfinished, sketched out in the clay. If the clay dries, all is lost.

COSIMO DALBO. Well?

LUCIO SETTALA. I thought it was lost. [*An irresistible smile shines in his eyes. His voice trembles.*] It is not lost; it still lives. The last touch of the thumb is there, still living.

[*He makes the gesture of moulding instinctively.*]

COSIMO DALBO. How?

LUCIO SETTALA. She knows the ways of the art. she knows how the clay is kept

soft. Once she used to help me. She herself damped the cloths.

COSIMO DALBO. So she thought of keeping the clay moist while you were dying!

LUCIO SETTALA. Was not that too a way of opposing death? Was not that too an act of faith, admirable? She preserved my work.

COSIMO DALBO. While the other preserved your life.

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Gloomily, lowering his forehead, without looking at his friend, in an almost hard voice.*] Which of the two is worth more? Life is intolerable to me, if it was only given back with such a dragging weight on it. I have told you: you should have let me die. What greater renunciation can I make than that I have made? Only death could stay the rush of desire that drives my whole being, fatally, towards its own particular good. Now I live again: I recognise in myself the same man, the same force. Who shall judge me if I follow out my destiny?

COSIMO DALBO. [*Terrified, taking him by the arm as if to restrain him.*] But what will you do? Have you made up your mind?

[*Struck by the sudden terror in the voice and gesture of his friend,* LUCIO *hesitates.*]

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Putting his hands through his hair feverishly.*] What shall I do? What shall I do? Do you know a more cruel torture? I am dizzy; do you understand? If I think that she is there, and waiting for me, and the hours are passing, and my strength being lost, and my ardour burning itself away, dizziness clutches hold of my soul, and I am in fear that I shall be drawn there, perhaps to-night, perhaps to-morrow. Do you know what that dizziness is? Ah, if I could reopen the wound that they have closed for me!

COSIMO DALBO. [*Trying to lead him towards the window.*] Be calm, be calm, Lucio. Hush! I think I hear the voice . . .

LUCIO SETTALA. [*Starting.*] Silvia's?

[*He turns deathly pale.*]

COSIMO DALBO. Yes. Be calm. You are in a fever.

[*He touches his forehead.* LUCIO *leans on the window-sill, as if all his strength is leaving him.*]

[SILVIA SETTALA *enters with* FRANCESCA DONI. *The latter has her arm round her sister's waist.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. Oh, Dalbo, are you still here?

[*She does not see* LUCIO'S *face, which he has turned to the open air.*]

COSIMO DALBO. [*Composing his countenance, and greeting* FRANCESCA.] Lucio kept me.

SILVIA SETTALA. Had he a great deal to tell you?

COSIMO DALBO. He always has a great deal to tell me, sometimes too much. And he is tired.

SILVIA SETTALA. Did he tell you that we are going to Bocca d' Arno on Saturday?

COSIMO DALBO. Yes. I know.

FRANCESCA DONI. Have you ever been to Bocca d' Arno?

COSIMO DALBO. No, never. I know the country about Pisa: San Rossore, Gombo, San Pietro in Grado; but I never went as far as the mouth of the river. I know that the coast is most lovely.

[SILVIA *gazes fixedly at her husband, who remains leaning motionless against the window-sill.*]

FRANCESCA DONI. Delicious at this time of the year: a low, open coast, with fine sand: sea, river, and woods: the scent of resin and sea-grass: sea-gulls, nightingales. You ought to come often and see Lucio while he is there.

COSIMO DALBO. With pleasure.

SILVIA SETTALA. We can put you up.

[*She leaves her sister and goes towards her husband, with her light step.*]

FRANCESCA DONI. Our mother has a simple house there, but it is large, white inside and outside, in a thicket of oleanders and tamarinds, and there is an Empire spinet, which used to belong — fancy to whom? — to a sister of Napoleon, the Duchess of Lucca, the terrible, bony Elisa Baciocchi: a spinet that sometimes wakes and weeps under Silvia's fingers; and there

is a boat, if the Napoleonic relic does n't, tempt you, a lovely boat, as white as the house.

[Silvia *leans in silence against* Lucio's *shoulder, as if expectant. He remains absorbed.*]

Cosimo Dalbo. To live in a boat, on the water, aimlessly, there is nothing so refreshing. I have lived like that for weeks and weeks.

Francesca Doni. We ought to put our convalescent in a boat, and confide him to the good sea.

Silvia Settala. [*Touching her husband lightly on the shoulder.*] Lucio! [*He starts and turns.*] What are you doing? We are here. Here is Francesca.

[*He looks his wife in the face, hesitatingly; then tries to smile.*]

Lucio Settala. There is a shower coming. I was looking for the first drops: the odour of the earth. . . .

[*He turns again towards the window, and holds out his open hands; they tremble visibly.*]

Francesca Doni. April either weeps or laughs.

Lucio Settala. Oh, Francesca, how are you?

Francesca Doni. Quite well. And you, Lucio?

Lucio Settala. Quite well, quite well.

Francesca Doni. Are you going away on Saturday?

Lucio Settala. [*Looking at his wife, in a dreamy way.*] Where?

Francesca Doni. Why, to Bocca d' Arno.

Lucio Settala. Ah, yes, true. My memory is quite gone.

Silvia Settala. Do you not feel well to-day?

Lucio Settala. Yes, yes, quite well. The weather upsets me a little; but I feel well, pretty well. [*In the tone with which he pronounces these simple words there is an excess of dissimulation, which gives him the strangeness of a madman. It is evident that the attention of the three bystanders is intolerable to him.*] Are you going, Cosimo?

Cosimo Dalbo. Yes, I am going. It is time. [*He prepares to go.*]

Lucio Settala. I will go with you as far as the garden-gate.

[*He leaves the window and goes towards the door, anxiously.*]

Silvia Settala. Are you going without your hat?

Lucio Settala. Yes, I am hot. Don't you feel how heavy the air is?

[*He pauses on the threshold, waiting for his friend. A sharp pain suddenly goes through all hearts, striking every one silent.*]

Cosimo Dalbo. *Au revoir.*

[*He bows in a constrained way, and goes out with* Lucio. Silvia *bends her head, knitting her brows, as if she is thinking out some resolution. Then it seems as if she is lifted on a sudden wave of energy.*]

Francesca Doni. Have you seen Gaddi?

Silvia Settala. Not yet. He has not come to-day.

Francesca Doni. Then you don't know.

Silvia Settala. What?

Francesca Doni. What he has done?

Silvia Settala. No.

Francesca Doni. He went to see Dianti.

Silvia Settala. [*With restrained emotion.*] To see her! When?

Francesca Doni. Yesterday.

Silvia Settala. And you have seen him?

Francesca Doni. Yes, I met him. He told me . . .

Silvia Settala. Speak, speak!

Francesca Doni. He went to see her yesterday, about three. He sent in his name. He was admitted at once. She received him smilingly, bowed, never said a word, stood before him, waiting for the old man to speak, listened to him quietly and respectfully. You can imagine what he might have said to persuade her to give back the key, to give up any further attempts, and not trouble a peace bought back at the price of blood, and what sorrow! When he had finished she merely asked: "Did Lucio Settala send you to

me?" On his reply in the negative, she added very firmly: "Pardon me, but I cannot admit that any one but he has the right of asking what you have asked."

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Turning pale and drawing herself up as if for a contest.*] Ah, that is her last word. Well, there is some one else who has an equal right and who will insist on her right. We shall see.

FRANCESCA DONI. [*Startled.*] What are you thinking of doing, Silvia?

SILVIA SETTALA. What is necessary.

FRANCESCA DONI. What then?

SILVIA SETTALA. Seeing her, facing her, in the place where she is an intruder. Do you understand?

FRANCESCA DONI. You would go there?

SILVIA SETTALA. Yes, I am going there. I know her time. You yourself know it. I will wait for her. She shall see. We shall meet face to face at last.

FRANCESCA DONI. You will not do it.

SILVIA SETTALA. Why not? Do you think I have not the courage?

FRANCESCA DONI. I entreat you, Silvia!

SILVIA SETTALA. Do you think I tremble?

FRANCESCA DONI. I entreat you!

SILVIA SETTALA. Oh, be sure, I shall not lower my eyes, I shall not faint. You ought to know me by now; I have gone through more than one ordeal.

FRANCESCA DONI. I know, I know. Nothing is too much for you. But think: to go there, after all that, in the very place where the horrible thing happened, there, alone, face to face with that woman, who has done you so much injury.

SILVIA SETTALA. Well? What of that? Have I once — once, Francesca! — failed to accomplish what seemed to me necessary? Tell me, have you ever known me refuse a burden? From what torture have I drawn back? I have faced many other sorrows, as you know. You are afraid that my heart will fail me if I set foot where he fell? But I had the courage then to look at him through the crack of the door, when he lay on his bed of death, and there was no one by me to support me; and, before I was allowed to go to his bedside, the surgeon's steel and the blood-stained lint passed through my hands.

FRANCESCA DONI. Yes, yes, true: your strength is great. Nothing is too much for you. But think; this is not the same thing. It is not the same thing to go there, and to find yourself face to face with a woman whom you do not know, capable of anything, obstinate, impudent.

SILVIA SETTALA. I have no fear of her. What she does is base. Because she thinks me weak and submissive, therefore she is bold; because I have so long remained silent and aloof, therefore she thinks she can once more get the better of me. But she is wrong. Then all I cared for was lost, all resistance was useless. Now I have won it back, and I defend it.

FRANCESCA DONI. My God! you are throwing yourself into a hand to hand contest. And if she resists?

SILVIA SETTALA. How resists? I have my right. I can turn her out.

FRANCESCA DONI. Silvia, Silvia, my sister, I entreat you; wait a few days longer, think it over a little before you do this. Do not be rash.

SILVIA SETTALA. Ah, you speak well, you who are happy, you who are safe, you whose life is secure and with nothing to threaten your peace. Wait, think over! But do you know the crisis in which I find myself to-day? Do you know what I am fighting for? For my own self and for Beata, for existence, for the light of my eyes. Do you see? I cannot again go through a martyrdom in which all my nerves were torn to pieces; in which every torture was tried on me. I have given sorrow all I can give it; I have felt the hard iron on my neck and on my wrists; at the day's end my sleep was taken away by the horror of the day to come, in which I should have to go on living, and, in order to live, squeeze out my heart drop by drop when it seemed empty of everything. Ah, you speak well, you! When you smile in your home your smile returns to you in a hundred rays, as if you lived in a crystal. For me, smiling was one sorrow the more; under it, I clenched my teeth; but Beata never saw a tear in my eyes. That I might

fulfil the promise of her name, when there was not a fibre in me that was not wrenched asunder, my hands were always held out to her with flowers. I could not begin over again. I would rather go away myself, and find a little quiet seashore somewhere, and lie down there with Beata and let the sea take us.

FRANCESCA DONI. [*Throwing her arms around her sister's neck, and kissing her.*] What are you saying? what are you saying? You ought to be afraid of nothing any longer. Does he not love you? Have you not seen all his love come back? That is what matters; all the rest is nothing.

[SILVIA *closes her eyes for a few instants, and the illusion brightens her face.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. Yes, yes, I have seen his love come back. It seems . . . How could I doubt that voice? When I am not there, he calls me, he looks for me; he needs me; it seems as if I am to lead his steps. [*She shakes herself, withdraws from her sister's arms, and becomes anxious again.*] But to-day. . . . Did you see him? Did you look at him? To-day he is not like he was yesterday. A sudden change. . . . Did you look at him when he was at the window, leaning out? Did you hear the sound of his words? Did you see how his arm trembled when he stretched it out? Ah, tell me if you too felt that something had happened, that something had disturbed him.

FRANCESCA DONI. He is still convalescent. Think; a mere nothing is enough to disturb him, the air, the weather . . .

SILVIA SETTALA. No, no, it is not that. And did you not see? Cosimo Dalbo too seemed to be making an effort to hide some shadow. My eyes never deceive me.

FRANCESCA DONI. No, it did not strike me. He was talking with me.

SILVIA SETTALA. [*With increasing agitation.*] But Lucio went down to see him out, and he has not yet come back. Or perhaps he went across to the other side. [*Goes to the window, and looks through the curtains.*] Ah, he is still there, at the gate, talking, talking. He seems beside himself. [*Lifts her eyes to the clouds.*] The thunder is coming. [*Looks out again, very intently.*]

FRANCESCA DONI. Call him!

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Turning, as if seized by a terrible thought.*] I am sure of it, I am sure of it.

FRANCESCA DONI. What are you thinking of now?

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Pausing, and pronouncing the words distinctly, pale but resolute.*] Lucio knows that she is waiting for him.

FRANCESCA DONI. He knows? How?

SILVIA SETTALA. There is no doubt, there is no doubt.

FRANCESCA DONI. You imagine it.

SILVIA SETTALA. I feel it; I am sure of it.

FRANCESCA DONI. But how?

SILVIA SETTALA. It was bound to come; she was bound to find out the way one day or another. How? A letter, perhaps. He has received a letter.

FRANCESCA DONI. And you were not on the watch?

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Disdainfully.*] Even that?

FRANCESCA DONI. But perhaps you are mistaken.

SILVIA SETTALA. I am not mistaken. After the old man's visit, she wrote. Delay is no longer possible now, not a day, not an hour. You see the danger. Though he may have come back to me with all his soul, though he may have broken with her entirely, though he may have gone back to another life, another happiness, do you not feel what might still be the fascination for him of a woman who says, obstinate and certain: "I am here, I wait"? To know that she is there, that she is waiting there every day, that nothing can dishearten her. Do you see the danger? If Lucio knew this morning that she is waiting for him, he must know to-night, and from my lips, that she waits for him no longer. [*An indomitable energy strengthens and lifts her whole being.*] He shall know it to-night; I promise him. [*She stretches out her hand towards the window, with the gesture of one taking an oath.*] Will you come with me?

FRANCESCA DONI. [*Anxious and en-*

treating.] Silvia, Silvia, think for one moment! Think what you are doing!

SILVIA SETTALA. I do not ask your aid. I only ask you to come with me as far as the door. For the rest, I alone suffice; it is necessary that I should be alone. Will you? What time is it?

[*Turns to look at the time; goes towards the table.*]

FRANCESCA DONI. [*Stopping her.*] I entreat of you! Listen to me, Silvia! My heart tells me that no good can come of what you are wanting to do. Listen to your sister! I entreat of you.

SILVIA SETTALA. [*With a gesture of impatience.*] Don't you know the game I am playing? Let me be. I am going alone. [*Bends over the table, and looks at the time.*] Four o'clock. I have not a moment to lose. Is your carriage there?

[*The rain falls suddenly on the trees in the garden.*]

FRANCESCA DONI. See how it is pouring! Don't go out! Put it off till to-morrow. Come, listen. [*Tries to draw her towards her.*] Wait at least till it stops raining.

SILVIA SETTALA. I have not a minute to lose. I must be there before her; she must find me there as if in my own house. Do you understand? Let me go. Quick, my hat, my cloak, my gloves. Giovanna!

[*She goes into the next room calling to her maid.* FRANCESCA DONI, *terrified, goes towards the window, on which the rain is beating.*]

FRANCESCA DONI. My God! my God! [*Looks into the garden; calls:* Lucio! Lucio!

[*Turns towards the door through which her sister has gone out.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Coming back, out of breath.*] I am ready. I left Beata there in tears. She wanted to go out with me. Stay, please; go and comfort her. I will go alone. I shall take your carriage. *Au revoir.* [*Is about to kiss her sister.*]

FRANCESCA DONI. You are going, then? You have decided?

SILVIA SETTALA. I am going.

FRANCESCA DONI. I will go with you.

SILVIA SETTALA. Let us go. [*Involuntarily she turns and looks around the room, as if to embrace everything that is in it in one look. The curtains tremble, the rain increases. She breathes in the damp fragrance that enters at the window. For one instant the strung bow of her will slackens.* The odour of the earth . . .

[*She shivers, as she suddenly catches sight of* LUCIO, *who appears on the threshold, feverishly, with bare head, his hair and his clothes wet with rain. They look at one another. An interval of weighty silence.*]

LUCIO SETTALA. [*In a hoarse voice.*] You are going out?

SILVIA SETTALA. Yes, I am going out.

LUCIO SETTALA. How pale you are! [SILVIA *puts her hand to her throat.*] Where are you going? It is a deluge.

[*He touches his dripping hair.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. I have to go out. I shall not be long. Beata is in there, crying because she wants to come with me. Go and comfort her, tell her that perhaps I will bring her back something beautiful.

[LUCIO *suddenly takes her hands and looks her fixedly in the eyes.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Mistress of herself, with a clear and firm accent.*] What is it, Lucio? [*He casts down his eyes. She withdraws her hands, shaking his as if in a farewell greeting. The temper of her will rings out in her vivid voice.*] *Au revoir!* Come, Francesca. It is time.

[*She goes out rapidly, followed by her sister.* LUCIO SETTALA *remains with bowed head, staggering under a thought that transfixes him.*]

THE THIRD ACT

A high and spacious room, lighted by a glass roof, covered with dark awnings. In the wall at the back there is a rectangular opening, somewhat larger than a door, leading into the sculptor's studio. On the architrave are some fragments of the frieze of the Parthenon; against the two sides are two large winged figures, "clothed with the wind," the Nike of Samothrace and the other Nike sculptured by Pœonius for the Doric temple of

Olympia consecrated to Zeus; the opening is covered by a red curtain.

In the left wall there is a door, hidden by a rich and heavy portière; in the left, a little door is hidden by curtains. Wide divans, covered with cloths and cushions, surround the room. The figures are arranged carefully, as if to induce meditation and reverie: a bunch of corn in a copper vase stands before the Eleusinian bas-relief of Demeter; a little bronze Pegasus on a pedestal of "verde antico" stands before the Ludovisi Medusa.

The sentiment expressed by the aspect of the place is very different from that which softens the aspect of the room in the other house, over against the mystic hill. Here the choice and analogy of every form reveals an aspiration towards a carnal, victorious, and creative life. The two divine messengers seem to stir and widen the close atmosphere incessantly with the rush of their immense flight.

[Silvia Settala *stands in the middle of the room, having laid down her hat, cloak, and gloves. She seems trying to remember the things about her, almost to renew her acquaintance with them, to re-establish a communion with them, not to feel estranged from them. She represses her anguish under her sister's eyes.* Francesca Doni *is seated, because her knees tremble and her heart beats too loud.*]

Silvia Settala. [*Looking about her.*] It is strange; it seems larger.

Francesca Doni. What?

Silvia Settala. The room. It does n't seem the same.

[*She looks about her, as if breathing an unfamiliar air. An interval of silence.*]

Francesca Doni. [*Listening.*] Did you shut the door?

Silvia Settala. Yes, I shut it.

Francesca Doni. We shall hear her open it.

Silvia Settala. Are you afraid? It is not time yet. In a minute you must go.

Francesca Doni. Where?

Silvia Settala. Will you wait for me in the carriage, in the street?

Francesca Doni. No, it is impossible. I want to be here, to be near you. Could I not hide myself?

Silvia Settala. Hide yourself, here? No. I must be alone.

Francesca Doni. Have pity on me! I shall die of suspense.

Silvia Settala. Wait. There ought to be a secret door here. [*Guided by memory, she goes towards the wall where there is the hidden door; looks, finds it, opens it. A wave of light falls over her.*] Do you see! It goes from here into the model's room, then into a corridor. At the end of the corridor there is a door, which leads to the Mugnone. Will you go out that way?

Francesca Doni. Yes, but let me stay in the room or the corridor and wait. I will wait till you call.

Silvia Settala. You promise to wait till I call?

Francesca Doni. Yes, I promise.

Silvia Settala. Do not fear. See, there is the sun on the window.

[*Both look out through the half open door. The inner light shines on their faces. A luminous streak extends over the floor.*]

Francesca Doni. It is not raining now. Look at all the primroses on the roadside.

Silvia Settala. Go and wait on the roadside, in the open air. Go.

Francesca Doni. There is an old sick horse, with his legs in the water. Do you see? And the swallows skim across it. I think . . .

[*She starts and turns suddenly, gazing at the motionless folds of the portière.*]

Silvia Settala. What is it?

Francesca Doni. I thought I heard . . .

[*Both listen.*]

Silvia Settala. No, you are mistaken. It is still early. And then the door on the stairs makes a great noise when it closes. Did you not hear it when we came in? The walls tremble.

Francesca Doni. [*Imploringly.*] Silvia!

Silvia Settala. What is it now?

Francesca Doni. Listen. There is still time. Come away, come away at least for to-day! Try, at least. She will know you

have been here. We will speak to the caretaker again. You ought to leave some sign here, forget a glove, for instance. She will understand, she will not return.

SILVIA SETTALA. A glove enough? Ah, how easy everything is for your heart! [*She looks round her again, with a secret despair.*] There is nothing left of me, here. [*The sister remains by the half-open door, her figure partially lit up by the vivid reflection. Silvia moves some paces into the room. An interval of silence.*] Everything seems larger, higher, darker.

FRANCESCA DONI. It is the shadow that deceives you. There is not much light. Draw back the awning over the skylight.

SILVIA SETTALA. No, it is better like this. [*She looks in every corner, as if seeking a trace.*] Tell me . . . [*Her voice chokes with emotion.*] That night they came for you, and you hurried here. You were here at the very beginning . . . [*Hesitates.*] Where was he? Do you remember exactly where?

FRANCESCA DONI. There, in the studio, under the statue. No, do not go!

[SILVIA *turns towards the red curtain that hangs between the two Victories. At her feet, like a dividing line, stretches the thin zone of the sun.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. [*In a low voice.*] The statue is there.

FRANCESCA DONI. Do not go! [SILVIA *remains for some instants motionless and silent before the closed curtain, from which she is separated by the shining zone.*] Do not go! [SILVIA *steps across the sunlight, almost violently, as if to overcome an obstacle; with a rapid movement she raises the curtain, slips between the folds, and disappears. The curtain falls behind her, heavy and thick. There are a few instants of silence, in which nothing is heard but the rapid breathing of the sister. Suddenly, within the purple depths, appears the white face of Silvia, which seems irradiated with the light of the masterpiece. Her bare hands, as they put aside the curtains, seem to shine against the depths of colour. Her eyes are intent, widened by wonder, dazzled, not by a vision of death, but by an image of perfect life. The water gathers tremulously in her eyes. Two marvellous tears form little by little, shine, and slowly run down her cheeks. Before they reach her mouth she stops them with her fingers, diffuses them over her face, as if to bathe in lustral dew; for it is not by the remembrance or the trace of human bloodshed that she is moved, but by the sight of a thing of beauty, solitary and free. She has received the supreme gift of beauty: a truce to anguish, a pause to fear. The sublime lightning-flash of joy has shone through her wounded soul for an instant, rendering it crystalline as tears. These tears are but the soul's mute and ardent offering before a masterpiece.*] Silvia, Silvia, you are weeping.

SILVIA SETTALA. [*In a subdued voice, with a gesture of silence.*] Hush! [*She moves away from the curtain, asking in a subdued voice:*] Have you seen? have you seen?

FRANCESCA DONI. [*Misunderstanding, with a start.*] Who? Her? Is she there?

SILVIA SETTALA. No, the statue. [*The sister nods her head, with a gesture expressing rapt admiration. The sound of a heavy door closing is heard. Both start.*] She is here. Go, go.

FRANCESCA DONI. [*Holding out her arms towards her with a last agonised entreaty.*] Oh, my sister!

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Recovering her former energy.*] Go! Do not fear.

[*She pushes her sister out through the door, and closes it. The zone of sun disappears; the room returns to an even shadow.*]

[SILVIA SETTALA *is standing with her face turned towards the door, her eyes fixed, almost rigid in expectation. Through the profound silence is heard distinctly the turning of the key in the lock.* SILVIA'S *attitude does not change. A hand lifts the portière.* GIOCONDA DIANTI *enters, closing the door behind her. At first she does not perceive the adversary, since she comes from the light into the shadow and a thick veil covers her whole face. When she perceives her, she stops, with a choked cry. Both remain for some instants facing one another without speaking.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. [*With a firm and clear accent, but without resentment or menace.*] I am Silvia Settala. [*Her rival is silent, still veiled. A pause.*] And you?

GIOCONDA DIANTI. [*In a low voice.*] Do you not know, Signora?

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Still restraining herself.*] I know only that you have entered here, as into a place that belongs to you. You find me here, as in my own house. One of us two, therefore, usurps the right of the other; one of us two is the intruder. Which? [*A pause.*] I perhaps?

GIOCONDA DIANTI. [*Always hidden under the veil, and in a low voice, as if to lessen her audacity.*] Perhaps.

[SILVIA SETTALA *turns paler and staggers a little, as if she had received a blow.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Resolutely, quivering with disdain.*] Well, there is a woman who has drawn a man into her net with the worst allurements; who has torn him away from the peace of home, the nobility of art, the beauty of a dream which he had nourished for years with the flowers of his force; who has dragged him into a turbid and violent delirium, where he has lost all sense of goodness and justice; who has inflicted on him the sharpest torments that the cruelty of a torturer sick with *ennui* could desire; who has exhausted and withered him up, keeping a perverse fever continually alight in his veins; who has rendered life intolerable to him; who has armed his hand and turned it against his own life; who in short, has known that he was lying wounded to death on a far-off bed, for days and days, while a ceaseless fight went on about him against death; and who has not had remorse, nor pity, nor shame, but has gone back to the sinister place before the blood was wiped off the floor, meditating another attack upon her prey, awaiting him again at the journey's end, calculating one by one the effects of her temerity and of her tenacity, promising herself the pleasure of another ruin. There is a woman who has done this, who has said: "A strong and noble life flourished freely in the world; I have seized it, bent it back, beaten it down, then shattered it at a blow. I thought I had destroyed it for ever. And lo! it flourishes again, is renewed, re-arises, can put forth fresh flowers! About it the wounds close, the pains are calmed, hope springs up again, joy can smile! Shall I endure this wrong? Shall I let myself be thus deluded? No, I will begin again, I will hold on, I will overcome all resistance, I will be implacable." There is a woman who has promised this to herself, who has gripped her will like an axe, who is prepared to deliver fresh blows smiling. Do you know her? She has entered here with her face covered, she has spoken in a dull voice, she has let fall a cold word, calculating always on her own audacity and on the other's submissiveness. Do you know her?

GIOCONDA DIANTI. [*Without changing her manner.*] She whom I know is different. Only because she is sad in your presence, does she speak in a low voice. She respects the great and sorrowful love that has given you life; she admires the virtue that exalts you. While you were speaking, she understood that it was only in order to comfort an unutterable despair that your words had created a figure so different from the real person. There is nothing implacable in her; but she herself obeys a power that may be implacable.

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Bitter and haughty.*] I know that you are practised in all tongues.

GIOCONDA DIANTI. Of what avail is this harshness? Your first words had another sound; and it seemed, when you asked me a question, that you wanted simply to know the truth.

SILVIA SETTALA. And what then is your truth?

GIOCONDA DIANTI. The truth that matters, between us, is one only: truth of love. You know it. But I fear to wound.

SILVIA SETTALA. Do not fear to wound.

GIOCONDA DIANTI. The woman against whom you made such accusations was ardently loved, and — suffer me to say it! — with a glorious love. She did not abase but exalt a strong life. And since the last voice that she heard, a few hours before the terrible deed was accomplished, the last was of love, she believes that she is

still loved. And this is the truth that matters.

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Blindly.*] She is wrong, she is wrong . . . You are wrong! He loves you no longer, he loves you no longer; perhaps he has never loved you. His was not love but a poisoning, but sharp slavery, madness, and thirst. When he suffered on his pillow, remembrance passed through his eyes from time to time like a flash of terror. Weeping at my feet, he has blessed the blood that was poured out for his ransom. He does not love you, he does not love you!

GIOCONDA DIANTI. Your love cries out like a drowning man.

SILVIA SETTALA. He does not love you! You have been a gad-fly to him, you have made him frantic, you have driven him to his death.

GIOCONDA DIANTI. Not I, not I, have driven him to his death, but you yourself. Yes, he wished to die, that he might cast off a fetter, but not that which bound him to me: another, yours, that which was set upon him by your virtue or your rule, and which made him suffer intolerably.

SILVIA SETTALA. Ah, there is nothing that you dare not travesty! From him, from his own mouth, in an hour when his whole soul had risen up into the light, from him I heard it: "If violence is enough to break a yoke, let it be blessed!" From him I heard it, when all his soul opened again to the truth.

GIOCONDA DIANTI. But here, a few hours before he gave way to the horrible thought, here (all these things are witnesses to it) he said to me the most ardent and the sweetest words of all his love; here he once more called me life of his life, here he told me once more his dream of forgetfulness, of liberty, of art, of joy. And here he told me of the insupportableness of his yoke, the inevitable weight of goodness, more cruel than any other, and the horror of daily suffering, the repugnance at returning to the house of silence and tears, the repugnance at length become unconquerable.

SILVIA SETTALA. No, no. You lie.

GIOCONDA DIANTI. To escape that anguish, one evening when all seemed to him sadder and more silent than ever, he sought death.

SILVIA SETTALA. You lie, you lie! I was far away.

GIOCONDA DIANTI. And you accuse me of having inflicted an infamous torment upon him, of having been his torturer! Ah, your hands, above all, your hands of goodness and pardon, prepared for him every night a bed of thorn, on which he could not lie down. But, when he entered here where I awaited him as one awaits the creating God, he was transformed. Before his work he recovered strength, joy, faith. Yes, a continual fever burned in his blood, kept alight by me (and this is all my pride); but the fire of that fever has fashioned a masterpiece.

[*Points towards her statue, hidden by the curtain.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. It is not the first; it will not be the last.

GIOCONDA DIANTI. Truly, it will not be the last; because another is ready to leap forth from its covering of clay, another has palpitated already under the life-giving thumb, another is half-alive, and waits from moment to moment for the miracle of art to draw it wholly forth to the light. Ah, you cannot understand this impatience of matter to which the gift of perfect life has been promised! [SILVIA SETTALA *turns towards the curtain, takes a few steps, slowly, as if involuntarily, as if in obedience to a mysterious attraction.*] It is there; the clay is there. That first breath that he infused into it, I have kept alive from day to day, as one waters the furrow where the seed lies deep. I have not let it perish. The impress is there, intact. The last touch, which his feverish hand set upon it at the last hour, is visible there, energetic and fresh as yesterday, so powerful that my hope in the midst of all the agony of sorrow is set there with a seal of life, and takes strength from it. [SILVIA SETTALA *pauses in front of the curtain, as before, and remains motionless and silent.*] Yes, it is true, you watched by the bedside of the dying man, intent upon a ceaseless strife to win him back from death; and for this be

envied, and for this be praised to all eternity. You had strife, agitation, effort: you had to accomplish a thing which seemed superhuman, and which intoxicated you. I, shut out, far off, in solitude, could only gather and bind up, knitting my will together, my sorrow in a vow. My faith was equal to yours; truly, it was leagued with yours against death. The last creative spark of his genius, of the divine fire that is in him, I have not let it go out, I have kept it alive, with a religious and uninterrupted vigilance. Ah, who can say to what height the preserving force of such a vow may attain? [SILVIA SETTALA *is about to turn violently, as if to reply, but restrains herself.*] I know, I know: it is simple and easy enough, what I have done; I know: it is no heroic effort, it is the humble duty of a menial. But it is not the act that matters. What matters is the spirit in which the act is accomplished; the fervour of it is all that matters. Nothing is more sacred than the work that begins to live. If the spirit in which I have watched over it can reveal itself to your soul, go and see! That the work may go on living, my visible presence is needful. Realising this necessity, you will understand how in replying "Perhaps" to a question, I wished to respect a doubt which might be in you, but which was not in me, which is not in me. You cannot feel at home here as in your own house. This is not a house. Household affections have no place here; domestic virtues have no sanctuary here. This is a place outside laws and beyond common rights. Here a sculptor makes his statues. He is alone here with the instruments of his art. Now I am nothing but an instrument of his art. Nature has sent me to him to bring him a message, and to serve him. I obey; I await him to serve him still. If he entered now, he could take up the interrupted work which had begun to live under his fingers. Go and see!

[SILVIA SETTALA *stands before the curtain, without advancing. An increasing shiver shakes her whole body, betraying her inner agitation; while the words of her rival become more and more sharp and stinging, definite, and at last hostile. Suddenly she turns, panting, impetuous, resolved upon the last defence.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. No. It is useless. Your words are too clever. You are practised in all tongues. You transform into an act of love and faith what is only an act of policy or of treachery. The work that was interrupted should have perished. With the same hand that had impressed the sign of life upon the clay, with the same hand he grasped the weapon and turned it against his heart. He did not doubt that he had set the deepest of gulfs between himself and his work. Death has passed there, and has severed every bond. What was interrupted should be lost. Now he is born again, he is a new man, he aspires towards other conquests. In his eyes there is a new light; his strength is impatient to create other forms. All that is behind him, all that is on the other side of the shadow, has no longer any power or value. What does it matter to him that an old piece of clay should fall into dust? He has forgotten it. He will find fresher pieces, into which to infuse the breath of his new birth, and to model into the image of the idea that now inflames him. Away with the old clay! How could you profess to think that you were necessary to his art? Nothing is necessary to the man who creates. All converges in him. You say that Nature sent you to him to bear him a message. Well, he has received it, he has understood it, and he has responded to it with a sublime expression. What other could he derive from you? What other could you give him? It is not given to man to attain twice the same summit, to accomplish twice the same prodigy. You are left there, on the other side of the shadow, far off, alone, on the old earth. He goes towards the new earth now, where he shall receive other messages. His strength seems virgin, and the beauty of the world is infinite.

GIOCONDA DIANTI. [*Taken aback by the unexpected vigour which repels her, becoming more acrid, more haughty than ever, and with an air of defiance.*] I am living and am here; and he has found in me more than

one aspect, and the words still intoxicate me that he said when he spoke to me of his vision, different every morning when I come before him. Up to yesterday, certainly, he did not know that I was waiting for him; and his unconsciousness has deceived you. But to-day he knows. Do you understand? He knows that I am here, that I await him. This morning a letter told him, a letter which came into his hands, which he has read. And I am certain — do you understand? — I am certain that he will come. Perhaps he is on the way, perhaps he is near the door. Shall we wait for him?

[*An extraordinary change comes over the face of* SILVIA. *It seems as if something strange and horrible enters into her. She is like one suddenly caught in the coils, writhing in the fascination of the serpent, blindly. The ancient fatality of deceit suddenly assails the soul of the pure woman, conquers and contaminates it. At the last words of the enemy she breaks into an unexpected laugh, bitter, atrocious, provocative, that renders her unrecognisable.* GIOCONDA DIANTI *seems overcome by it.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. Enough, enough. Too many words. The game has lasted too long. Ah, your certainty, your pride! But how could you believe that I should have come here to contest the way with you, to forbid your entrance, to face your audacity, if I had not had a certainty far more sound than yours to warrant me? I know your letter of yesterday, it was shown to me, I know not if with more astonishment or disgust.

GIOCONDA DIANTI. [*Overcome.*] No, it is not possible!

SILVIA SETTALA. Yes, it is so. As for the answer, I bring it. Lucio Settala has lost the memory of what has been, and asks to be left in peace. He hopes that your pride will prevent you from becoming importunate.

GIOCONDA DIANTI. [*Beside herself.*] He sends you? he himself? It is his answer? his?

SILVIA SETTALA. His, his. I would have spared you this harshness if you had not forced me. Will you go now?

GIOCONDA DIANTI. [*Her voice hoarse with rage and shame.*] I am turned out? [*Fury suffocates her, and gives her a frantic vigour. The vindictive and devastating wild beast seems to awaken in her. Through her flexible and powerful body passes the same force which contracts the homicidal muscles of feline animals in ambush. The veil, which she has kept on her face like a dark mask, renders more formidable the attitude of one ready to do injury in any way and with any weapon.*] Turned out? [SILVIA SETTALA *stands convulsed and livid before the furious woman, and it is not the spectacle of that fury which terrifies her, but something which she sees within herself, something horrible and irreparable: her lie.*] Ah, you have brought him to this! How? how? Binding the soul like the wound with cotton-wool? doctoring him with your soft hands? He is unmade, finished, a useless rag. I understand; now I understand. Poor thing! poor thing! Ah, why is he not dead, rather than the survivor of his soul? He is finished, then, a poor beggar whom you lead by the hand in the empty streets. All is destroyed, all is lost. He will never lift his head again, his eye is darkened.

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Interrupting her.*] Be silent, be silent! He is living and strong; never had he such light in himself. God be praised!

GIOCONDA DIANTI. [*Frantically.*] It is not true. I, I was his strength, his youth, his light. Tell him! Tell him! He has become old; from to-day he is limp and soulless. I carry away with me (tell him!) all that was most free, ardent, and proud in him. The blood that he poured out there, under my statue, was the last blood of his youth. What you have re-infused into his heart is without flame, is weak, is vile. Tell him! I carry away with me to-day all that was his power and his pride and his joy and his all. He is finished. Tell him! [*Fury blinds and suffocates her. It is as if she is invaded by a turbid destructive will, as by a demon. All her being contracts in the necessity of accomplishing an immediate act*

of destruction. A sudden thought precipitates that instinct towards an aim.] And that statue which is mine, which belongs to me, which he has made out of the life that I have shed from me drop by drop, that statue which is mine . . . [*She rushes like a wild beast towards the closed curtain, raises it and passes through.*] . . . well, I will shatter it, I will cast it down!

[Silvia Settala *utters a cry, and rushes forward to prevent the crime. Both disappear behind the curtain. The rapid breathing of a brief struggle is heard.*]

Silvia Settala. [*Crying out.*] No, no, it is not true, it is not true! I lied!

[*The despairing words are covered by the sound of a mass that inclines and falls, the fracture of the falling statue; then follows another lacerating cry from Silvia, torn by agony from her very vitals.*]

[Francesca Doni *appears, mad with terror, running towards the cry, which she recognises; while* Gioconda Dianti *is seen between the curtains, still veiled, in the attitude of one who has committed a murder and seeks to escape.*]

Francesca Doni. Assassin! Assassin! [*She stoops to succour her sister, while the other rushes out.*] Silvia, Silvia, my sister, my sister! What has she done to you, what has she done to you? Ah, the hands, the hands.

[*Her voice expresses the horror of one who sees something frightful.*]

Silvia Settala. Take me away! Take me away!

Francesca Doni. My God, my God! They were underneath! My God! They are crushed! Water! water! There is none here. Wait.

Silvia Settala. Ah, what agony! I cannot bear it: I am dying. Take me away! [*She appears between the red curtains, her face inexpressibly contracted by agony, while her sister bends to support her two hands wrapped in a piece of wet cloth, taken from the clay, through which the blood oozes.*] What agony! I cannot bear it any longer. [*She is about to faint, when all at once* Lucio Settala *rushes into the room like a madman. She trembles, fixing on him her great eyes full of tears, in which her despairing soul dies.*] You, you, you!

Francesca Doni. [*Still supporting the two poor crushed hands that drench the cloth in which the incurable wreck is hidden.*] Support her, support her! She is falling.

[Lucio Settala *supports the poor bleeding creature, almost fainting, in his arms. But, before losing consciousness, she turns her glazing eyes towards the curtains as if to indicate the statue.*]

Silvia Settala. [*In a dying voice.*] It . . . is safe.

THE FOURTH ACT

A ground floor room, white and simple, with two side walls making an angle, almost entirely open to the light, which comes through a sort of large window, after the manner of a tepidarium. The blinds are raised, and through the window-panes can be seen oleanders, tamarinds, rushes, pines, golden sands dotted with dead seaweed, the sea calm and dotted with lateen sails, the peaceful mouth of the Arno, beyond the river the wild thickets of Gombo, the Cascine di San Rossore, the far-off marble mountain of Carrara.

A door, leading to the interior, is on the third side. By the side of the door, on a bracket, is the Lady with the bunch of flowers, the famous figure of Andrea del Verrocchio, a new guest, come from the other house, like a faithful companion, whose beautiful hands are always flawless, as they make a graceful gesture toward the heart. On the other side is an old spinet, of the time of Elisa Baciocchi, Duchess of Lucca, with its case of dull wood inlaid with bright wood, borne by little gilded Cariatides in the Empire style, with its four pedals united in the form of a small harp.

It is an afternoon in September. The smile of vanishing summer seems to lay an enchantment over everything. In the deserted room the soul of music sleeping in the forgotten instrument makes itself felt, as if the hidden strings were touched by the calm rhythm of the neighbouring sea.

[Silvia Settala *appears on the threshold, from the inner room; she pauses; takes several steps towards the window; looks into the distance, looks about her with infinitely sad eyes. In her way of moving there is a sense of something wanting, calling up a vague image of clipped wings, a vague sentiment of strength humbled and shorn, of nobility brought low, of broken harmony. She is dressed in an ash-coloured gown, with a hem of black, like a thread of mourning. Long sleeves hide her arms without hands, which she sometimes lets drop by her side, and sometimes sets together, drawn a little back, as if to hide them in the folds, with a movement of shame and sorrow.*]

[*From outside, between the thick oleanders, appears a girlish figure,* La Sirenetta, *half fairy and half beggar girl, peering in. She glides towards the window with a furtive step, holding up in one hand a fold of her apron filled with seaweed, shells, and star-fish.*]

Silvia Settala. [*Catching sight of her, and going towards her with a smile.*] Oh, la Sirenetta! Come, come.

La Sirenetta. [*Coming forward to the window.*] Do you remember me? [*She remains outside so that her face is seen through the shimmer of the glass, which seems to continue about her the incessant, tremulous radiance of the sea. She is young, slender, graceful; her yellow hair is in disorder, her face the colour of ruddy gold, her teeth white as the bones of the cuttle-fish, her eyes humid and sea-green, her neck long and thin, with a necklace of shells about it; in her whole person something inexpressibly fresh and glancing, which makes one think of a creature impregnated with sea-salt, dipped in the moving waters, coming out of the hiding-places of the rocks. Her petticoat of striped white and blue, torn and discoloured, falls only just below the knees, leaving her legs bare; her bluish apron drips and smells of the brine like a filter; her bare feet, in contrast with the brown colour that the sun has given her flesh, are singularly pallid, like the roots of aquatic plants. And her voice is limpid and childish; and some of the words that she speaks seem to light up her ingenuous face with a mysterious happiness.*] Do you remember me, pretty lady?

Silvia Settala. I remember you; I remember you.

La Sirenetta. Do you remember me? Who am I?

Silvia Settala. Are you not la Sirenetta?

La Sirenetta. Yes, you have remembered me. When did you come back?

Silvia Settala. Not long ago.

La Sirenetta. You will stay?

Silvia Settala. A long time longer.

La Sirenetta. Till the winter, perhaps.

Silvia Settala. Perhaps.

La Sirenetta. And your little girl?

Silvia Settala. I expect her to-day. She is coming.

La Sirenetta. Beata! Is n't she called Beata?

Silvia Settala. Yes, Beata.

La Sirenetta. You, called her that, Beata, not Beatrice. When she was here, she asked me every day for star-fish, stars of the sea. Did she tell you? She made me sing. Did she tell you?

Silvia Settala. Yes, she told me. She remembers you. She likes you.

La Sirenetta. She likes me! I know. She gave me some of her bread every day.

Silvia Settala. You shall have it every day, if you like. Bread and food, Sirenetta, morning and night, whenever you like. Remember.

La Sirenetta. Morning and night I will bring you a star-fish. Will you have one? A pretty one, larger than a hand?

[Silvia Settala, *troubled, draws back her arms with an instinctive movement.*]

Silvia Settala. No, no, keep it for Beata.

La Sirenetta. [*Surprised.*] Won't you have it?

Silvia Settala. Tell me instead what you do with your life, tell me how you spend the day. Is it true that you talk with the sirens of the sea? Tell me all about it, Sirenetta.

La Sirenetta. Seven sisters were we,
Our mirror the fountain-head,
All of us fair to see.
"Flower of the bulrush makes no bread,
Hedgerow mulberry makes no wine,
Blade of grass no linen fine,"
The mother to the sisters said;
All of us fair to see,
And our mirror the fountain-head.
The first was fain to spin,
And wished for spindles of gold;
The second to weave threads in,
And wished for shuttles of gold;
The third to sew at her leisure,
And wished for needles of gold;
The fourth to cook for her pleasure,
And wished for platters of gold;
The fifth to sleep beyond measure,
And wished for dreams of gold;
The sixth to sleep night away,
And wished for coverings of gold;
The last to sing all day,
To sing for evermore,
And wished for nothing more.

[*She laughs with a quick glittering laugh that seems to tinkle against her shining teeth.*]

Do you like this story?

Silvia Settala. [*Charmed by the grace of the simple creature.*] Is that all? Why don't you go on?

La Sirenetta. If you sit here, I will put you to sleep as I put your child to sleep on the sands. Are you not sleepy now? Sleep is good, in September.
September bears to the plain
The windy breath of the mountain rain,
And puts the summer to sleep again.
Amen.

Silvia Settala. No. Go on with your story, Sirenetta.

La Sirenetta. The olive darkens for shedding,
Sorrow speeds the wedding,
Oil and tears wait for the treading.

Silvia Settala. Go on with your story, Sirenetta.

La Sirenetta. Where had we got?

Silvia Settala. "And wished for nothing more!" [*A pause.*]

La Sirenetta. Ah, here it is:

"Flowers of the bulrush makes no bread,
Hedgerow mulberry makes no wine,
Blade of grass no linen fine,"
The mother to the sisters said;
All of us fair to see,
And our mirror the fountain-head.
And so the first one spun
Her own heart's woe for the morrow;
And so the second wove,
And wove the cloth of sorrow;
And so the third one sewed
A poisoned shirt to wear;
And so the fourth one cooked
A dish of heart's despair;
And so the fifth one slept
Under the coverings of death;
And so the sixth one dreamt
In the arms of death.
The mother wept full sore,
And sighed away her breath;
But the last, that only sang
To sing, to sing all day,
To sing for evermore,
Found her a happy fate.

[*She lowers her voice and makes it secret and remote.*]

The sirens of the bay
Called her to be their mate. [*A pause.*]

Silvia Settala. Then it is true that you talk with the sirens?

La Sirenetta. [*Putting her forefinger to her lips.*] Must n't ask!

Silvia Settala. Is it true that no one knows where you sleep at night?

La Sirenetta. [*With the same gesture.*] Must n't ask!

Silvia Settala. Shall I give you shelter, here in the house?

La Sirenetta. [*Looking intently in her face, as if she had not heard the question.*] Your eyes are sad. I did not know what troubled me when I looked at them. Now I see: you have a great sorrow in your eyes. Some one of yours is dead.

Silvia Settala. You alone can comfort me.

La Sirenetta. Who of yours is dead?

Silvia Settala. Must n't ask!

La Sirenetta. Now I see you: you are not the same. I was thinking of a swallow, last September, who had lost his longest

feathers, and was nearly drowned in the sea. What have they done to you? Something wicked has been done to you.

SILVIA SETTALA. Must n't ask!

[*Instinctively she hides her arms without hands in the folds of her garment, with a sorrowful movement, which does not escape the notice of the bewitching creature; who suddenly, as if intentionally, drops the end of her apron, so that her little sea treasure falls and is scattered over the ground.*]

LA SIRENETTA. [*Stooping and choosing.*] Will you have a star-fish, a pretty one, bigger than a hand? Look! [*She shows the mutilated woman a large sea-star with five rays.*] Take it! I give it to you. [*The mutilated woman shakes her head in sign of refusal, pressing her lips together, as if to keep down the knot that tightens in her throat.*] Can't you? Are your hands sick, tied up? [*The mutilated woman nods her head.* LA SIRENETTA'S *voice becomes tremulous with pity.*] Did you fall into the fire? Were you burnt? Do they still hurt? Or are they getting better?

SILVIA SETTALA. [*In a scarcely audible voice.*] I have n't any hands.

LA SIRENETTA. [*Rising in affright.*] You have n't any! They have cut them off? No hands? [*The mutilated woman nods her head, frightfully pale. The other shivers with horror.*] No, no, no! It is n't true. [*She keeps her eyes fixed on the folds of the garment in which the mutilated woman hides her arms.*] Tell me it is n't true.

SILVIA SETTALA. I have n't any hands.

LA SIRENETTA. Why? why?

SILVIA SETTALA. Must n't ask!

LA SIRENETTA. Ah, what a cruel thing!

SILVIA SETTALA. I gave them away.

LA SIRENETTA. You gave them away? To whom?

SILVIA SETTALA. To my love.

LA SIRENETTA. Ah, what a cruel love! How beautiful they were, how beautiful! Do you think I don't remember? I have kissed them; many many times. I have kissed them with this mouth. They gave me bread, a pomegranate, a cup of milk. They were as beautiful as if the dawn had made them with a breath, as white as the flower of the foam, more delicate than the embroidery that the wind makes on the sand; they moved like the sun in the water, they talked better than the tongue or the eyes, they said kind words, what they gave turned to gold. I remember them! I see them, I see them. One day they were playing with the warm sand: the sand ran between the fingers as through a sieve, and they were pleased at playing; and Beata looked at them and laughed; and I looked at them and had the same pleasure. One day they peeled an orange; and made it into many pieces, and touched me with one of them, and it was as sweet as a honeycomb. One day they wrapped a handkerchief about the little one's foot, and she was crying because a crab had nipped her, and the pain stopped all at once, and the little one began to run along the shore. One day they played with those lovely curls, and of every curl they made a ring for every finger, and then began over again, and then began over again; and Beata fell asleep with the dew on her lips.

SILVIA SETTALA. [*In a choking voice.*] Don't say any more! don't say any more!

LA SIRENETTA. Ah, what a cruel love! [*A pause. She remains pensive.*] And where are they? Far away, all alone, in the earth, deep down. Did they bury them? Where? In a pretty garden? [*A pause. The mutilated woman shuts her eyes and leans her head against the window, in which the quiver of the sea is reflected.*] Did you see them taken away? How white they were! They have wrapped them up in strong ointment. And the rings? With all the rings? There was one with a green stone, and one with three pearls, and one of gold and iron twisted, and a smooth one, a shining hoop, and only that one was on the third finger. [*A pause. An indefinable expression appears on the face of the mutilated woman, as she lets her arms drop by her sides, while the rigidity of her whole body slackens.*] What are you thinking about? Dreaming of them? If they should grow warm again. . . . [*The mutilated woman opens her eyes and starts, as if suddenly awakened. Her arms quiver.*] What is the matter?

SILVIA SETTALA. It is strange. Sometimes it really seems to me as if I have them again, I seem to feel the blood rise to the tips of my fingers. When you spoke, I had them: they were more beautiful, Sirenetta!

LA SIRENETTA. More beautiful?

SILVIA SETTALA. You will comfort me, Sirenetta. I cannot take your star-fish, but I can see your eyes and hear your voice. Keep near me, now I have found you again. I would like to have you for a sister.

LA SIRENETTA. I would like you to have my hands, if they were not so rough and dark.

SILVIA SETTALA. Your hands are happy hands: they touch the leaves, the flowers, the sand, the water, the stones, children, animals, all innocent things. You are happy, Sirenetta: your soul is born again every morning; now it is little as a pearl, and now it is large as the sea. You have nothing and everything; you know nothing and everything.

LA SIRENETTA. [*Turning suddenly and interrupting her.*] Did you feel the gust? Look, look how many swallows on the sea! There are more than a thousand: a living cloud. Look how they shine! Now they are off; they are going on a long journey, to a far away land; the shadow walks over the water with them; some feathers are falling; evening will come on; they will meet the ships on the high sea; they will see the fires, hear the songs of the sailors; the sailors will see them pass; they will pass close to the sails; one of them will strike against the sails, and fall on the deck, tired. One night, a cloud of tired swallows fell upon a ship like a flock of starlings on the deck and quite covered it. The sailors never touched them. They never moved, for fear of frightening them; they never spoke, so that they might go to sleep. And as they were all over the stock of the anchor and the bar of the rudder, that night the ship went drifting under the moon. But at dawn . . . Ah, who is calling to you? [*She interrupts her dream, hearing a strange voice among the oleanders; and prepares to fly.*] Good-bye, good-bye.

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Anxiously.*] It is my sister. Do not run away, do not go, Sirenetta. Stay here near. Beata is coming.

LA SIRENETTA. Good-bye, good-bye. I will come back.

[*Runs towards the sea, vanishing into the sunlight.*]

[FRANCESCA DONI *appears between the oleanders, followed by the old man,* LORENZO GADDI.]

FRANCESCA DONI. Do you see who I am bringing you?

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Anxiously.*] And Beata? And Beata?

FRANCESCA DONI. She is coming presently. I left her with Faustina. I came beforehand, so that she should not come to you unexpectedly.

SILVIA SETTALA. Dear Maestro, how pleased I am to see you!

[*The old man instinctively stretches out his hands towards her. She bends slightly and offers him her forehead, which he touches with his lips.*]

LORENZO GADDI. [*Concealing his emotion.*] How happy I am to see you again, dear Silvia, and to see you up and well again! The sea helps you. The sea is always the great comforter. At Forte dei Marmi, yonder, I thought much of you.

SILVIA SETTALA. Is Forte dei Marmi far from here?

LORENZO GADDI. [*Pointing to the distant shore.*] Yonder, under Serravizza, on this side of Massa.

[*They look out of the window into the distance.*]

FRANCESCA DONI. How well one can see the mountains of Carrara to-day! You can count the peaks one by one. I never remember a clearer day than this. Who was with you, Silvia? La Sirenetta? I thought I saw her running towards the sea. And then here are her traces: sea-weed, shells, star-fish.

[*She points to the childish treasures scattered over the ground.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. Yes, she was with me just now.

LORENZO GADDI. Who is la Sirenetta?

FRANCESCA DONI. A little wandering mad creature.

SILVIA SETTALA. A seer, who has the gift of song; a creature of dream and truth, who seems a spirit of the sea. You should know her and love her as I do. When you know her and hear her speak, you find out many deep things. Truly she will seem to you perfect: she always gives and never asks.

LORENZO GADDI. She is like you in that.

SILVIA SETTALA. Alas, no. I should like to have been like her in that; but the light died away before the deceit of life. What blindness! I asked so much, that to obtain it, I stooped to tell a lie: I came out mutilated, maimed, in punishment for my lie. I had stretched out my hands too violently towards a good thing that fate denied me. I do not lament or weep. Since I must live, I will live. Perhaps one day my soul will be healed. I felt some hope arise in me, as I listened to the voice of that simple and guileless creature who can teach eternal things. She has promised to bring me a star-fish every morning. [*She tries to smile. The sister stands near the window and seems to be looking intently at the distant mountains; but there is a shadow of sadness over her gentle face.*] Look, Maestro, at the lady with the bunch of flowers. She has come with me. Now, if I look at her, there is something mournful in her for me: all the same I could not separate myself from her. Do you remember, Maestro, that day in April, that garlanded head?

LORENZO GADDI. I remember, I remember.

SILVIA SETTALA. The new life!

LORENZO GADDI. There was an omen in everything.

SILVIA SETTALA. When I see the camels pass loaded with faggots, there, on the other side of the Arno, in the thickets of Gombo, I think of the arrival of Cosimo Dalbo, of the joy of that evening, of the scarabæus that I put in the midst of a bunch of roses that Beata had picked. [*Turns towards her sister.*] O Francesca, I speak, and all the while my heart troubles me so that I can resist no longer. Where is Beata?

FRANCESCA DONI. [*Wrung with pain.*] You want to see her now? You are strong?

SILVIA SETTALA. Yes, yes, I am strong, I am ready. Suspense is worse.

FRANCESCA DONI. Then I will go and bring her to you.

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Unable to contain her anxiety.*] Wait a minute. Will you not stay with us here to-night, Maestro? I should be glad.

LORENZO GADDI. Well, yes, I will stay.

SILVIA SETTALA. We can put you up. I will have your room got ready. Wait, Francesca, a minute.

[*She is convulsed with emotion, which she can no longer restrain. She goes towards the door like one who runs away to hide the tears that are about to break forth.*]

FRANCESCA DONI. Shall I come, Silvia?

SILVIA SETTALA. [*With a choking voice.*] No, no. [*Goes out.*]

FRANCESCA DONI. Ah, the curse, the curse! Do you see her? While she was in bed, under the bedclothes, bound up, bleeding, all the horror of the thing did not appear. But now that she is on her feet again, now that she moves, walks, sees her friends, returns to her old ways, is about to use the gestures that she used to use! Think of it!

LORENZO GADDI. Yes, it is too frightful a fate. I remember what you said to her so tenderly, as you looked at her, on that day in April: "You seem as if you had wings!" The beauty and lightness of her hands gave her the aspect of a winged thing. There was in her a kind of incessant quiver. Now it is as if she dragged herself along.

FRANCESCA DONI. And it was a useless sacrifice, like all the others; it has done nothing, changed nothing: that is where it is so frightful a fate. If Lucio had stayed with her, I believe she would have been happy to have been able to give that last proof, to have been able to sacrifice for him her living hands. But she knows now all the truth, in all its nakedness. Ah, what an infamous thing! Would you have believed that Lucio was capable of it? Tell me.

LORENZO GADDI. He too has his fate, and he obeys it. As he was not master of his death, so he is not master of his life. I saw him yesterday. He had written me at Forte dei Marmi to ask me to go to the quarry and send him a block. I saw him yesterday in his studio. His face is so thin that it seems burnt up in the fire of his eyes. When he speaks, he becomes strangely excited. It troubled me. He works, works, works, with a terrible fury: perhaps he is seeking to rid himself of a thought that gnaws him.

FRANCESCA DONI. The statue is still there?

LORENZO GADDI. It is still there, without arms. He has left it so: he would not restore it. So, on the pedestal, it looks really like an ancient marble, dug up in one of the Cyclades. There is in it something sacred and tragic, after the divine immolation.

FRANCESCA DONI. [*In a low voice.*] And that woman, the Gioconda, was there?

LORENZO GADDI. She was there, silent. When one looks at her, and thinks that she is the cause of so much evil, truly one cannot curse her in his heart; no, one cannot, when one looks at her. I have never seen so great a mystery in mortal flesh.

[*A pause. The old man and the sister remain in thought, for some instants, with bowed heads.*]

FRANCESCA DONI. [*Sighing because of the anguish that oppresses her.*] My God, my God! And now it is time to bring Beata to her mother, and they will see one another again, after all that has happened; and the little one will learn the truth, will know the horrible thing. How is one to hide it, from her, remembering all her caresses, and mad for them! You saw her, you heard her, of old. . . .

[SILVIA SETTALA *reappears on the threshold. Her eyes are burning and all her body is contracted by a spasmodic force.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. I am here, Francesca; I am ready. The room is ready, Maestro, if you would like to go to it.

LORENZO GADDI. [*Going towards her, and in a voice trembling with emotion.*] Courage! It is the last ordeal.

[*He goes out by the door. The mutilated woman goes towards her sister, breathlessly.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. Now go, go! Bring her. I will wait here.

[*The sister puts her arms round her neck and kisses her in silence. Then she goes out towards the sea, and disappears rapidly among the oleanders.*]

SILVIA SETTALA, *breathlessly, looks through the midst of the boughs lighted by the oblique rays of the sun. The hour is exquisitely peaceful. The light is more limpid than the windows of the white room; the sea is tranquil as the flower of the flax, so motionless that the long reflections of the mirrored sails seem to touch the bottom; the stream seems to create that immense repose, pouring out the perennial wave of its peace; the health-giving woods, penetrated with fluid gold, rejoice marvellously, almost as if they lost their roots that they might swim in the delight of their odour; the marble Alps in the distance trace a line of beauty on the sky, in which they seem to reveal the dream arising out of their imprisoned populace of sleeping statues.*

[LA SIRENETTA *reappears in the silence, through which her pure voice is heard.*]

LA SIRENETTA. Are you alone?

SILVIA SETTALA. [*Agitated.*] Yes. I am waiting.

LA SIRENETTA. [*Coming close to her.*] Have you been crying?

SILVIA SETTALA. Yes, a little.

LA SIRENETTA. [*With infinite pity.*] You seem as if you had been crying for a year. Your eyes are burning. Your heart hurts you too much.

SILVIA SETTALA. Don't speak. I cannot crush my heart. [*She presses herself against the trunk of the nearest oleander, convulsed, no longer able to endure the agony of waiting.*] She is coming now, she is coming now.

[*She moves away from the tree and re-enters the room, as if seized with terror, like one seeking refuge.*]

THE VOICE OF BEATA. [*From among*

the oleanders.] Mamma! Mamma! [*The mother starts, and turns, frightfully pallid.*] Mamma!

[*The child rushes towards her mother with a cry of joy, her face lit up, heated, her hair in disorder, panting after a long run, carrying an untidy bunch of flowers. As she runs in, the bunch falls. The mutilated woman stoops towards the little arms that clasp her neck, and offers her death-like face to the furious kisses.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. Beata! Beata!

BEATA. [*Panting.*] Ah, how I have run, how I have run! I ran away from them, all alone. I ran, I ran. They did n't want to let me come. Ah, but I ran away from them, with my bunch of flowers.

[*Covers her mother's face with fresh kisses.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. You are all damp with sweat, you are hot, burning . . . My God!

[*In her rush of tenderness she instinctively makes a movement as if to wipe the child's face; but stops and hides her arms in the folds of her garments; and a shiver of visible horror runs through her.*]

BEATA. Why don't you take me up? Why don't you put your arms round me? Take me up, take me up, mamma!

[*She rises on tiptoe, to be caught into her mother's embrace. The mother takes a step backwards, blindly.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. Beata!

BEATA [*Following her.*] Don't you want me? don't you want me?

SILVIA SETTALA. Beata!

[*She tries to feign a smile with her ashen lips, distorted by unspeakable sorrow.*]

BEATA. Is it for fun? What are you hiding? O, give, give me what you are hiding!

SILVIA SETTALA. Beata! Beata!

BEATA. I have brought you flowers, such a lot of flowers. Do you see? do you see? [*As she turns to pick up the fallen bunch, she perceives her little wild friend, and remembers her.*] Oh, Sirenetta! Are you there? [LA SIRENETTA *is there, before the window, standing, a silent witness, with her eyes fixed on the sorrowful mother. As the repeated breath of the wind passes between the fronds of an arbutus and makes it tremble, so the sorrow of the mother seems to invest and penetrate that slender body which the oblique rays of the sun ring with bands of gold.*] Do you see what a lot? All for you! [*The child picks up the bunch.*] Take it!

[*She runs towards her mother again, who steps back.*]

SILVIA SETTALA. Beata! Beata!

BEATA. [*Astonished.*] Don't you want them? Take them! Take them!

SILVIA SETTALA. Beata!

[*She falls on her knees, overcome with sorrow, as if stricken by an unendurable blow, falls on her knees before her frightened child; and a flood of tears, that bursts from her eyes like blood from a wound, bathes her face.*]

BEATA. You are crying? You are crying?

[*Frightened she throws herself upon her mother's breast, with all her flowers.* LA SIRENETTA, *who has also fallen on her knees, lays her forehead and the palms of her hands upon the ground.*]

THE BONDS OF INTEREST

A COMEDY IN A PROLOGUE AND THREE ACTS

By JACINTO BENAVENTE

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TO

RAFAEL GASSET

CHARACTERS

Doña Sirena
Silvia
The Wife of Polichinelle
Columbine
Laura
Risela
Leander
Crispin
The Doctor
Polichinelle
Harlequin
The Captain
Pantaloon
The Innkeeper
The Secretary
1st and 2d Servants at the Inn
1st and 2d Constables

The action takes place in an imaginary country at the beginning of the Seventeenth Century

THE BONDS OF INTEREST

PROLOGUE

Spoken by CRISPIN

A conventional drop at the front, having a door in the middle, curtained.

Here you have the mummer of the antique farce who enlivened in the country inns the hard-earned leisure of the carter, who made the simple rustics gape with wonder in the square of every rural town and village, who in the populous cities drew about him great bewildering assemblages, as in Paris where Tabarin set up his scaffold on the *Pont-Neuf* and challenged the attention of the passers-by, from the learned doctor pausing a moment on his solemn errand to smooth out the wrinkles on his brow at some merry quip of old-time farce, to the light-hearted cutpurse who there whiled away his hours of ease as he cheated his hunger with a smile, to prelate and noble dame and great grandee in stately carriages, soldier and merchant and student and maid. Men of every rank and condition shared in the rejoicing — men who were never brought together in any other way — the grave laughing to see the laughter of the gay rather than at the wit of the farce, the wise with the foolish, the poor with the rich, so staid and formal in their ordinary aspect, and the rich to see the poor laugh, their consciences a little easier at the thought: "Even the poor can smile." For nothing is so contagious as the sympathy of a smile.

Sometimes our humble farce mounted up to Princes' Palaces on the whims of the mighty and the great; yet there its rogueries were not less free. It was the common heritage of great and small. Its rude jests, its sharp and biting sentences it took from the people, from that lowly wisdom of the poor which knows how to suffer and bear all, and which was softened in those days by resignation in men who did not expect too much of the world and so were able to laugh at the world without bitterness and without hate.

From its humble origins Lope de Rueda and Shakespere and Molière lifted it up, bestowing upon it high patents of nobility, and like enamoured princes of the fairy-tales, elevated poor Cinderella to the topmost thrones of Poetry and of Art. But our farce to-night cannot claim such distinguished lineage, contrived for your amusement by the inquiring spirit of a restless poet of to-day.

This is a little play of puppets, impossible in theme, without any reality at all. You will soon see how everything happens in it that could never happen, how its personages are not real men and women, nor the shadows of them, but dolls or marionettes of paste and cardboard, moving upon wires which are visible even in a little light and to the dimmest eye. They are the grotesque masks of the Italian *Commedia dell' Arte*, not as boisterous as they once were, because they have aged with the years and have been able to think much in so long a time. The author is aware that so primitive a spectacle is unworthy of the culture of these days; he throws himself upon your courtesy and upon your goodness of heart. He only asks that you should make yourselves as young as possible. The world has grown old, but art never can reconcile itself to growing old, and so, to seem young again, it descends to these fripperies. And that is the reason that these outworn puppets have presumed to come to amuse you to-night with their child's play.

THE FIRST ACT

A plaza in a city. The façade of an Inn is at the right, having a practicable door, with a knocker upon it. Above the door is a sign which reads INN.

[LEANDER *and* CRISPIN *enter from the left.*]

LEANDER. This must be a very great city, Crispin. Its riches and its power appear in everything.

CRISPIN. Yes, there are two cities. Pray God that we have chanced upon the better one!

LEANDER. Two cities do you say, Crispin? Ah! Now I understand — an old city and a new city, one on either side of the river.

CRISPIN. What has the river to do with it, or newness or age? I say two cities just as there are in every city in the world; one for people who arrive with money and the other for persons who arrive like us.

LEANDER. We are lucky to have arrived at all without falling into the hands of Justice. I should be heartily glad to stop here awhile and rest myself, for I am tired of this running about the world so continually.

CRISPIN. Not I! No, it is the natural condition of the free-born subjects of the Kingdom of Roguery, of whom am I, not to remain seated long in any one place, unless it be through compulsion, as to say in the galleys, where, believe me, they are very hard seats. But now since we have happened upon this city, and to all appearances it is a well-fortified and provisioned one, let us like prudent captains map out our plan of battle beforehand, if we are to conquer it with any advantage to ourselves.

LEANDER. A pretty army we shall make to besiege it.

CRISPIN. We are men and we have to do with men.

LEANDER. All our wealth is on our backs. You were not willing to take off these clothes and sell them, when by doing so we could easily have obtained money.

CRISPIN. I would sooner take off my skin than my good clothes. As the world goes nothing is so important as appearances, and the clothes, as you must admit, are the first things to appear.

LEANDER. What are we going to do, Crispin? Hunger and fatigue have been too much for me. I am overcome; I cannot talk.

CRISPIN. There is nothing for us to do but to take advantage of our talents and our effrontery, for without effrontery talents are of no use. The best thing, as it seems to me, will be for you to talk as little as possible, but be very impressive when you do, and put on the airs of a gentleman of quality. From time to time then I will permit you to strike me across the back. When anybody asks you a question, reply mysteriously, and if you open your mouth upon your own account, be sure that it is with dignity, as if you were pronouncing sentence. You are young; you have a fine presence. Until now you have known only how to dissipate your resources; this is the time for you to begin to profit by them. Put yourself in my hands. There is nothing so useful to a man as to have some one always at his heels to point out his merits, for modesty in one's self is imbecility, while self-praise is madness, and so between the two we come into disfavor with the world. Men are like merchandise; they are worth more or less according to the skill of the salesman who markets them. I tell you, though you were but muddy glass, I will so contrive that in my hands you shall pass for pure diamond. And now let us knock at the door of this inn, for surely it is the proper thing to have lodgings on the main square.

LEANDER. You say at this inn? But how are we going to pay?

CRISPIN. If we are to be stopped by a little thing like that, then we had better search out an asylum or an almshouse or else beg on the streets, if so be that you incline to virtue. Or if to force, then back to the highway and cut the throat of the first passer-by. If we are to live upon our means, strictly speaking, we have no other means to live.

LEANDER. I have letters of introduction to persons of importance in this city, who will be able to lend us aid.

CRISPIN. Then tear those letters up; never think of such baseness again! Introduce yourself to no man when you are in need. Those would be pretty letters of credit indeed! To-day you will be received with the greatest courtesy; they will tell you that their houses and their persons are to be considered as yours. The next time you call, the servant will tell you that his master is not at home. No, he is not expected soon . . . and at the next visit nobody will trouble so much as to open the door. This is a world of giving and taking, a shop, a mart, a place of exchange, and before you ask you have to offer.

LEANDER. But what can I offer when I have nothing?

CRISPIN. How low an opinion you must have of yourself! Is a man in himself, then, worth nothing? A man may be a soldier, and by his valor win great victories. He may be a husband or a lover, and with love's sweet, oblivious medicine, restore some noble dame to health, or some damsel of high degree, who has been pining away through melancholy. He may be the servant of some mighty and powerful lord, who becomes attached to him and raises him up through his favor, and he may be so many other things besides that I have not the breath even to begin to run them over. When one wants to climb, why any stair will do.

LEANDER. But if I have not even that stair?

CRISPIN. Then accept my shoulders, and I will lift you up. I offer you the top.

LEANDER. And if we both fall down upon the ground?

CRISPIN. God grant that it may be soft! [*Knocking at the inn-door.*] Hello! Ho, within there! Hello, I say, in the inn! Devil of an innkeeper! Does no one answer? What sort of a tavern is this?

LEANDER. Why are you making all this noise when as yet you have scarcely begun to call?

CRISPIN. Because it is monstrous that they should make us wait like this! [*Calling again more loudly.*] Hello within! Who's there, I say? Hello in the house! Hello, you thousand devils!

INNKEEPER. [*Within.*] Who's there? What knocking and what shouting at my door! Is this the way to stand and wait? Out, I say!

CRISPIN. It is too much! And now he will tell us that this dilapidated old tavern is a fit lodging for a gentleman.

[*The* INNKEEPER *and* TWO SERVANTS *come out of the Inn.*]

INNKEEPER. Softly, sirs, softly; for this is not a tavern but an inn, and great gentlemen have been lodged in this house.

CRISPIN. I would like to have seen those same great gentlemen — gentle, a little more or less. What? It is easy enough to see by these rascals that they are not accustomed to waiting on persons of quality. They stand there like blockheads without running to do our service.

INNKEEPER. My life! But you are impertinent!

LEANDER. My servant is a little forward, perhaps. You will find him somewhat hasty in his temper. However, your inn will be good enough for the brief time that we shall be able to remain in it. Prepare an apartment for me and another for my servant, and let us spare these idle words.

INNKEEPER. I beg your pardon, sir. If you had only spoken before. . . . I don't know how it is, but somehow gentlemen are always so much more polite than their servants.

CRISPIN. The fact is my master is so good-natured that he will put up with anything. But I know what is proper for his service, and I have no mind to wink at villainy. Lead us to our apartments.

INNKEEPER. But where is your luggage?

CRISPIN. Do you suppose that we are carrying our luggage with us on our backs, like a soldier's knapsack, or trundling it like students' bundles in our hands? Know that my master has eight carts coming after him, which will arrive if he stays here long enough, and at that he will only remain for the time which is absolutely necessary to conclude the secret mission with which he has been instructed in this city.

LEANDER. Will you be silent and hold your tongue? What secret is it possible to

keep with you? If I am discovered through your impudence, through your misguided talk. . . .

[*He threatens and strikes* CRISPIN, *with his sword.*]

CRISPIN. Help! He is killing me!

[*Running.*]

INNKEEPER. [*Interposing between* LEANDER *and* CRISPIN.] Hold, sir!

LEANDER. Let me chastise him! The most intolerable of vices is this desire to talk.

INNKEEPER. Do not beat him, sir!

LEANDER. Let me at him! Let me at him! Will the slave never learn?

[*As he is about to strike* CRISPIN, CRISPIN *runs and hides himself behind the* INNKEEPER, *who receives all the blows.*]

CRISPIN. [*Crying out.*] Ay! Ay! Ay!

INNKEEPER. Ay, say I! For I got all the blows!

LEANDER. [*To* CRISPIN.] Now you see what you have done. This poor man has received all the blows. Down! Down! Beg his pardon!

INNKEEPER. It will not be necessary, sir. I pardon him willingly. [*To the servants.*] What are you doing standing there? Prepare the rooms in which the Emperor of Mantua is accustomed to reside when he is stopping in this house, and let dinner be made ready for these gentlemen.

CRISPIN. Perhaps it would be as well if I saw to that myself, otherwise they may delay and spoil everything, and commit a thousand blunders for which I shall be held responsible, for my master, as you see, is not a man to submit to insult. I am with you, sirrahs — and remember who it is you serve, for the greatest good fortune or the direst calamity in the world enters at this moment behind you through these doors.

[*The servants, followed by* CRISPIN, *re-enter the Inn.*]

INNKEEPER. [*To* LEANDER.] Will you be good enough to let me have your name, where you come from, and the business which brings you to this city?

LEANDER. [*Seeing* CRISPIN *re-enter from the Inn.*] My servant will let you have them. Learn not to bother me with foolish questions. [*He goes into the Inn.*]

CRISPIN. What have you done now? You have not dared to question my master? If you want to keep him so much as another hour in your house, never speak to him again. No! Not one word!

INNKEEPER. But the laws are very strict. It is absolutely necessary that the questions should be answered. The law in this city —

CRISPIN. Never mention the law to my master! Silence! Silence! And for shame! You do not know whom you have in your house; no, and if you did, you would not be wasting your time on these impertinences.

INNKEEPER. But am I not to be told at least —

CRISPIN. Bolt of Heaven! Silence! Or I will call my master, and he will tell you whatever he sees fit — and then you will not understand. Take care! Look to it that he wants for nothing! Wait on him with every one of your five senses, or you will have good reason to regret it! Have you no knowledge of men? Can't you read character? Don't you see who my master is? What? How is that? What do you say? No reply? . . . Come! Come! . . . In! . . .

[*He goes into the Inn, pushing the* INNKEEPER *before him.*]

[*The* CAPTAIN *and* HARLEQUIN *enter from the left.*]

HARLEQUIN. As we return from the fields which surround this fair city — and beyond a doubt they are the best part of it — it seems that without intending it we have happened upon this inn. What a creature of habit is man! And surely it is a vile habit, this being obliged to eat every day.

CAPTAIN. The sweet music of your verses had quite deprived me of all thought. Delightful privilege of the poet!

HARLEQUIN. Which does not prevent him from being equally lacking upon his own part. The poet wants everything. I approach this inn with fear. Will they consent to trust us to-day? If not, we must rely upon your sword.

CAPTAIN. My sword? The soldier's sword, like the poet's lyre, is little valued in this city of merchants and traders. We have fallen upon evil days.

HARLEQUIN. We have. Sublime poesy, which sings of great and glorious exploits, is no more. It is equally profitless to offer your genius to the great to praise or to lampoon them. Flattery and satire are both alike to them. They neither thank you for the one nor fear the other, nor do they read them. Aretino himself would have starved to death in these days.

CAPTAIN. But tell me, how is it with us? What is the position of the soldier? Because we were defeated in the late wars — more through these base traffickers who govern us and send us to defend their interests without enthusiasm and without arms, than through any power of the enemy, as if a man could fight with his whole heart for what he did not love — defeated by these traffickers who did not contribute so much as a single soldier to our ranks or lend one single penny to the cause but upon good interest and yet better security; who, as soon as they scented danger and saw their pockets in jeopardy, threatened to make common cause with the enemy — now they blame us, they abuse us and despise us, and seek to economize out of our martial misery, which is the little pay that they give us, and would dismiss us if they dared, if they were not afraid that some day all those whom they have oppressed by their tyranny and their greed would rise up and turn against them. And woe to them when they do, if we remember that day on which side lie duty and justice!

HARLEQUIN. When that day comes you will find us at your side.

CAPTAIN. Poets cannot be depended upon for anything. Your spirits are like the opal, which looks different in every light. You are in an ecstasy to-day over what is about to be born, and to-morrow over what is in the last stages of dissolution. You have a special weakness for falling in love with ruins, which to my mind is a melancholy thing. And since as a rule you sit up all night, you more often see the sun set than the day break; you know more about going down than you do of rising.

HARLEQUIN. That cannot truthfully be said of me. I have often seen the sun rise when I had no place to lay my head. Besides, how can you expect a man to hail the day as blithely as the lark when it always breaks so unfortunately for him? — What say you? Shall we try our fate?

CAPTAIN. It cannot be avoided. Be seated, and let us await what our good host has in store.

HARLEQUIN. [*Calling into the Inn.*] Hello, there! Ho! Who serves to-day?

[*The* INNKEEPER *enters.*]

INNKEEPER. Ah, gentlemen! Is it you? I am sorry, but there is no entertainment at the Inn to-day.

CAPTAIN. And for what reason, if it is proper to ask the question?

INNKEEPER. A proper question for you to ask. Do you suppose that I trust nobody for what is consumed in this house?

CAPTAIN. Ah! Is that the reason? And are we not persons of credit, who are to be trusted?

INNKEEPER. No; not by me. And as I never expect to collect anything, you have had all that courtesy requires out of me already. This being the case, you will be so kind as to remove yourselves from my door.

HARLEQUIN. Do you imply that there is nothing to be counted between us but money? Are all the praises that we have lavished upon your house in all parts of the country to go for nothing? I have even composed a sonnet in your honor, in which I celebrate the virtues of your stewed partridges and hare pie! And as for my friend, the Captain, you may rest assured that he alone would uphold the reputation of your hostelry against an army. Is that a feat which is worth nothing? Is there nothing but clinking of coins in your ears?

INNKEEPER. I am not in a jesting mood; it does not suit my humor. I want none of your sonnets, nor the Captain's sword either, which might better be employed in other business.

CAPTAIN. Name of Mars! You are right. Better employed upon an impudent rascal's back, flaying of his hide!

[*Threatening him and striking him with his sword.*]

INNKEEPER. [*Crying out.*] What? How is this? You strike me? Help! Justice!

HARLEQUIN. [*Restraining the* CAPTAIN.] Don't run your head into a noose on account of such a worthless scamp.

CAPTAIN. I shall kill him.

[*Striking him.*]

INNKEEPER. Help! Justice!

[*The* TWO SERVANTS *enter, running, from the Inn.*]

SERVANTS. They are killing our master!

INNKEEPER. Save me!

CAPTAIN. Not one of them shall remain alive!

INNKEEPER. Will no one come?

[CRISPIN *and* LEANDER *enter.*]

LEANDER. What is this brawl?

CRISPIN. In the presence of my master? Before the house where he resides? Is there no rest possible, nor quiet? Hold! Or I shall summon Justice. Order! Quiet!

INNKEEPER. This will be the ruin of me! With such a dignitary stopping in my house! —

HARLEQUIN. Who is he?

INNKEEPER. Never dare to ask me his name!

CAPTAIN. Your pardon, sir, if we have disturbed your rest, but this rascally villain —

INNKEEPER. It was n't my fault, my lord. These unblushing scoundrels —

CAPTAIN. What? I? Unblushing — I? I can bear no more!

CRISPIN. Hold, sir Captain, for one is here who is able to redress your wrongs, if so be you have had them of this man.

INNKEEPER. Consider, sir, that for more than a month these fellows have eaten at my expense without the payment of one penny — without so much as the thought of payment; and now because I refuse to serve them to-day, they turn upon me.

HARLEQUIN. I do not turn because I am accustomed to face that which is unpleasant.

CAPTAIN. Is it reasonable that a soldier should not be given credit?

HARLEQUIN. Is it reasonable that a sonnet should be allowed to pass for nothing, although it is written with the best of flourishes in praise of his stewed partridges and hare pies? And all this upon credit on my part, for I have never tasted one of them, but only his eternal mutton and potatoes.

CRISPIN. These two noble gentlemen are right. It is infamous that a poet and a soldier should be denied in this manner.

HARLEQUIN. Ah, sir! You have a great soul!

CRISPIN. No, I have not — but my master, who is here present. Being a grand gentleman, there is nothing which appeals to him so much in the world as a poet or a soldier.

LEANDER. To be sure. I agree with you.

CRISPIN. You need have no doubt but that while he remains in this city you will be treated with the consideration you deserve. You shall want for nothing. Whatever expense you may be at in this inn, is to be placed upon his account.

LEANDER. To be sure. I agree with you.

CRISPIN. And let the landlord look to it that you get your deserts!

INNKEEPER. Sir! . . .

CRISPIN. And don't be so stingy with those partridges and hairy pies. It is not proper that a poet like Signor Harlequin should be obliged to draw upon his imagination in his descriptions of such material things.

HARLEQUIN. What? Do you know my name?

CRISPIN. No, I do not; but my master, being such a great gentleman, knows all the poets who exist or who ever did exist in the world, provided always that they were worthy of the name.

LEANDER. To be sure. I agree with you.

CRISPIN. And none of them is more famous than you, Signor Harlequin. Whenever I consider that you have not been treated here with the respect which is your due —

INNKEEPER. Your pardon, sir. They shall be made welcome, as you desire. It is sufficient that you should be their security.

CAPTAIN. Sir, if I can be of service to you in any way . . .

CRISPIN. What? Is it a small service to

be permitted to know you? O glorious Captain, worthy only to be sung by this immortal poet!

HARLEQUIN. Sir!

CAPTAIN. Sir!

HARLEQUIN. So my verses are known to you?

CRISPIN. How? Known? And if known would it ever be possible to forget them? Is not that wonderful sonnet yours, which begins:

"The soft hand which caresses and which slays" . . .

HARLEQUIN. What?

CRISPIN. What?

"The soft hand which caresses and which slays" . . .

It does not say what.

HARLEQUIN. Nonsense! No, that is not my sonnet.

CRISPIN. Then it is worthy of being yours. And you, Captain! Who is not familiar with your marvellous exploits? Was it not you who, alone, with twenty men, assaulted the Castle of the Red Rock in the famous battle of the Black Field?

CAPTAIN. You know, then?

CRISPIN. How? . . . Do I know? Oh! Many a time, transported, I have listened to my master recount the story of your prowess! Twenty men, twenty, and you in front of them, and in front of you the castle. Boom! Boom! Boom! from the castle, shots and bombards, darts and flaming squibs and boiling oil! And the twenty men all standing there like one man, and you in front of them! And from above: Boom! Boom! Boom! And the roll of the drums: Rum-a-tum-tum! And the blare of the trumpets: Tara! Tara-ra! And you all the while there alone with your sword: Swish! Swish! Swish! A blow here, a blow there. Or without your sword. . . . Above, below. . . . A head, an arm. . . .

[*He begins to rain blows about him right and left, and to kick, using his fists, his feet, and the flat side of his sword indifferently.*]

SERVANTS. Ay! Ay! Oh! Oh!

INNKEEPER. Hold! Hold! Restrain yourself! You don't know what you are doing. You are all excited. . . . It is as if the battle were really taking place. . . .

CRISPIN. How? I am excited? Know that I always feel in my breast the *animus belli*, the thirst for war!

CAPTAIN. It seems almost as if you must have been there.

CRISPIN. To hear my master describe it is the same as being there. No, it is preferable to it. And is such a soldier, the hero of the Red Rocks in the Black Fields, to be insulted thus? Ah! How fortunate it is that my master was present, and that important business had brought him to this city, for he will see to it that you are accorded the consideration you deserve. So sublime a poet, so great a captain! . . . [*To the servants.*] Quick! What are you doing there? Bring the best food that you have in the house and set it before these gentlemen. And first of all get a bottle of good wine; it will be a rare pleasure to my master to drink with them. He will esteem himself indeed fortunate. Don't stand there and stare! Quick! Bestir yourselves!

INNKEEPER. Run, run! I go. . . . We are getting something out of this after all.

[*The* INNKEEPER *and the* TWO SERVANTS *run into the Inn.*]

HARLEQUIN. Ah, sir! How can we ever repay you?

CAPTAIN. How? We certainly never shall. . . .

CRISPIN. Let nobody speak of payment before my master. The very thought gives offense. Be seated, be seated. My master, who has wined and dined so many princes, so many noblemen at his table, will deem this an even greater pleasure.

LEANDER. To be sure. I agree with you.

CRISPIN. My master is not a man of many words; but, as you see, the few that he does speak are, as it were, fraught with wisdom.

HARLEQUIN. His grandeur appears in everything.

CAPTAIN. You have no idea what a comfort it is to our drooping spirits to find a noble gentleman like you who condescends to treat us with consideration.

CRISPIN. Why, this is nothing to what he will condescend to do! I know that my

master will never rest satisfied to stop at such a trifle. He will elevate you to his own level, and then hold you up beside him on the same exalted plane. He is just that kind of a man.

LEANDER. [*To* CRISPIN.] Don't let your tongue run away with you, Crispin.

CRISPIN. My master is averse to foolish talk; but you will soon know him by his deeds.

[*The* INNKEEPER *and the* SERVANTS *re-enter, bringing wine and provisions which they place upon the table.*]

INNKEEPER. Here is the wine — and the dinner.

CRISPIN. Drink, drink and eat! See that they want for nothing; my master is agreeable. He will be responsible. His responsibility is fortunately not in question. If you would like anything you don't see, don't hesitate to ask for it. My master will order it. And let the landlord look to it that it is brought promptly, for verily at this business, he is the sorriest kind of a knave.

INNKEEPER. To be sure. . . . I don't agree with you.

CRISPIN. Not another word! You insult my master.

CAPTAIN. Your very good health!

LEANDER. Your good healths, gentlemen! To the health of the greatest poet and the best soldier in the world!

HARLEQUIN. To the health of the noblest gentleman!

CAPTAIN. The most liberal and the most generous!

CRISPIN. In the world! Excuse me, but I must drink too, though it may seem presumptuous. But on a day like this, this day of days, which has brought together the sublimest poet, the bravest captain, the noblest gentleman, and the most faithful servant in the universe . . . [*They drink.*] Now you will permit my master to retire. The important business which brings him to the city admits of no further delay.

LEANDER. To be sure.

CRISPIN. You will not fail to return every day and present your respects to him?

HARLEQUIN. Every hour! And I am going to bring with me all the poets and all the musicians of my acquaintance, to serenade him with music and songs.

CAPTAIN. I shall bring my whole company with me with torches and banners.

LEANDER. You will offend my modesty.

CRISPIN. And now eat, drink! Mind you, sirrahs! About it! Quick! Serve these gentlemen. [*To the* CAPTAIN.] A word in your ear. Are you out of money?

CAPTAIN. What shall I say?

CRISPIN. Say no more. [*To the* INNKEEPER.] Eh! This way! Let these gentlemen have forty or fifty crowns on my master's account, as a present from him. Omit nothing! See that they are satisfied.

INNKEEPER. Don't worry, sir. Forty or fifty, did you say?

CRISPIN. While you are about it, better make it sixty. Your health, gentlemen!

CAPTAIN. Long life to the noblest gentleman in the world!

HARLEQUIN. Long life!

CRISPIN. Shout long life, too, you uncivil people.

INNKEEPER AND SERVANTS. Long life! Long life!

CRISPIN. Long life to the sublimest poet and the best soldier in the world!

ALL. Long life!

LEANDER. [*To* CRISPIN.] Are you mad, Crispin? What are you doing? How are we ever going to get out of this?

CRISPIN. The same way that we got in. You see now poesy and arms are ours. On! We shall achieve the conquest of the world!

[*All exchange bows and salutations, after which* LEANDER *and* CRISPIN *go out upon the left, as they came in. The* CAPTAIN *and* HARLEQUIN *attack the dinner which is set before them by the* INNKEEPER *and the* SERVANTS, *who wait upon them assiduously with anticipation of their every want.*]

CURTAIN

THE SECOND ACT

A garden with the façade of a pavilion opening upon it.

[DOÑA SIRENA *and* COLUMBINE *enter from the pavilion.*]

SIRENA. Is it not enough to deprive a woman of her five senses, Columbine? Can it be possible that a lady should see herself placed in so embarrassing a position and by low, unfeeling people? How did you ever dare to show yourself in my presence with such a tale?

COLUMBINE. But sooner or later would n't you have had to know it?

SIRENA. I had rather have died first. But did they all say the same?

COLUMBINE. All, one after the other, exactly as I have told it to you. The tailor absolutely refuses to send you the gown until you have paid him everything that you owe.

SIRENA. Impudent rascal! Everything that I owe *him*. The barefaced highwayman! And does he not stand indebted for his reputation and his very credit in this city to me? Until I employed him in the decoration of my person he did not know, so to speak, what it was to dress a lady.

COLUMBINE. All the cooks and musicians and servants say the same. They refuse to play to-night or to appear at the fête unless they are all paid beforehand.

SIRENA. The rogues! The brood of vipers! Whence does such insolence spring? Were these people not born to serve? Are they to be paid nowadays in nothing but money? Is money the only thing which has value in the world? Woe unto her who is left without a husband to look after her, as I am, without male relatives, alas, without any masculine connection! A woman by herself is worth nothing in the world, be she never so noble or virtuous. O day foretold of the Apocalypse! Surely Antichrist has come!

COLUMBINE. I never saw you so put out before. I hardly know you. You have always been able to rise above these calamities.

SIRENA. Those were other days, Columbine. Then I had my youth to count on, and my beauty, as powerful allies. Princes and great grandees cast themselves at my feet.

COLUMBINE. But on the other hand you did not have the experience and knowledge of the world which you have now. And as far as beauty is concerned, surely you never shone with such refulgence as to-day — that is, if you will listen to me.

SIRENA. Don't attempt to flatter me. Do you suppose that I should ever have got myself into such a fix if I had been the Doña Sirena of my twenties?

COLUMBINE. Your twenty suitors?

SIRENA. What do you think? I had no end of suitors. And you who have not yet begun upon twenty, you have not the sense to perceive what that means and to profit by it. I would never have believed it possible. Otherwise should I have adopted you for my niece if I had, though I saw myself abandoned by every man in the world and reduced to live alone with a maid servant? If instead of wasting your youth on this impecunious Harlequin, this poet who can bring you nothing but ballads and verses, you had had the sense to make a proper use of your time, we should not be languishing now in this humiliating dilemma.

COLUMBINE. What do you expect? I am too young to resign myself to being loved without loving. If I am ever to become skilful in making others suffer for love of me, surely I must learn first what it is one suffers when one loves. And when I do, I am positive I shall be able to profit by it. I have not yet turned twenty, but you must not think because of that I have so little sense as to marry Harlequin.

SIRENA. I would not trust you. You are capricious, flighty, and allow yourself to be run away with by your imagination. But first let us consider what is to be done. How are we to extricate ourselves from this horrible dilemma? In a short time the guests will arrive — all persons of quality and importance, and among them Signor Polichinelle and his wife and daughter, who, for various reasons, are of more account to me than the rest. You know my house has been frequented of late by several

noble gentlemen, somewhat frayed in their nobility, it is true, as I am, through want of means. For any one of them, the daughter of Signor Polichinelle, with her rich dowry and the priceless sum which she will inherit upon her father's death, would be an untold treasure. She has many suitors, but I interpose my influence with Signor Polichinelle and with his wife in favor of them all. Whichever one should be fortunate I know that he will requite my good offices with his bounty, because I have made them all sign an agreement which assures me of it. I have no other means than this to repair my state. If now some rich merchant or some trader by some lucky chance should fall in love with you . . . Ah, who can say? This house might become again what it was in other days. But if the insolence of these people breaks out to-night, if I cannot give the fête. . . . No! I cannot think of it! It would be the death of me!

COLUMBINE. Do not trouble yourself, Doña Sirena. We have enough in the house to provide the entertainment. As for the music and the servants, Signor Harlequin will be able to supply them — he is not a poet and in love with me for nothing. Many singers and choice spirits of his acquaintance will willingly lend themselves to any adventure. You will see that nothing will be lacking, and your guests will all say that they have never been present at so marvellous a fête in their lives.

SIRENA. Ah, Columbine! If that could only be, how greatly you would rise in my estimation! Run, run and seek out your poet. . . . There is no time to lose.

COLUMBINE. My poet? Surely he is walking up and down now on the other side of the garden, waiting for a sign.

SIRENA. I fear it would not be proper for me to be present at your interview. I ought not to demean myself by soliciting his favors. I leave all that to you. Let nothing be wanting at the fête and you shall be well repaid, for these terrible straits through which we are passing to-night cannot continue forever — or else I am not Doña Sirena!

COLUMBINE. All will be well. Have no fear.

[DOÑA SIRENA *goes out through the pavilion.*]

COLUMBINE. [*Stepping toward the right and calling.*] Harlequin! Harlequin! [CRISPIN *enters.*] It is n't he!

CRISPIN. Be not afraid, beautiful Columbine, mistress of the mightiest poet, who yet has not been able to heighten in his verses the splendors of your charm. If the picture must always be different from reality, the advantage in this case is all on the side of reality. You can imagine, no doubt, what the picture must have been.

COLUMBINE. Are you a poet, too, or only a courtier and a flatterer?

CRISPIN. I am the best friend of your lover Harlequin, although I only met him to-day; but he has had ample proof of my friendship in this brief time. My greatest desire has been to salute you, and Signor Harlequin would not have been the poet that I take him for, had he not trusted to my friendship implicitly. But for his confidence I should have been in danger of falling in love with you simply upon the opportunity which he has afforded me of seeing you.

COLUMBINE. Signor Harlequin trusted as much in my love as he did to your friendship. Don't take so much credit to yourself. It is as foolish to trust a man while he lives as a woman while she loves.

CRISPIN. Now I see that you are not so fatal to the sight as to the ear.

COLUMBINE. Pardon me. Before the fête to-night I must speak with Signor Harlequin, and . . .

CRISPIN. It will not be necessary. That is why I have come, a poor ambassador from him and from my master, who stoops to kiss your hand.

COLUMBINE. Who is your master, if I may ask that question?

CRISPIN. The noblest and most powerful gentleman in the world. Permit me for the present not to mention his name. Soon it will be known. My master desires to salute Doña Sirena and to be present at her fête to-night.

COLUMBINE. At her fête? Don't you know . . .

CRISPIN. I know everything. That is my business — to investigate. I know that there were certain inconveniences which threatened to becloud it; but there will be none. Everything is provided for.

COLUMBINE. What! Then you do know?

CRISPIN. I assure you everything is provided for — a sumptuous reception, lights and fireworks, musicians and sweet song. It will be the most brilliant fête which ever was in the world.

COLUMBINE. Ah, then you are an enchanter?

CRISPIN. Now you begin to know me. But I shall only tell you that I do not bring good fortune with me for nothing. The people of this city are so intelligent that I am sure they will be incapable of frowning upon it and discouraging it with foolish scruples when they see it arrive. My master knows that Signor Polichinelle and his only daughter, the beautiful Silvia, the richest heiress in the city, are to be present at the fête to-night. My master has to fall in love with her, my master has to marry her; and my master will know how to requite in fitting fashion the good offices of Doña Sirena and of yourself in the matter, if so be that you do him the honor to assist in his suit.

COLUMBINE. Your speech is impertinent. Such boldness gives offense.

CRISPIN. Time presses and I have no leisure to pay compliments.

COLUMBINE. If the master is to be judged by the man . . .

CRISPIN. Reassure yourself. You will find my master the most courteous, the most affable gentleman in the world. My effrontery permits him to be modest. The hard necessities of life sometimes compel the noblest cavalier to descend to the devices of the ruffian, just as sometimes they oblige the noblest ladies, in order to maintain their state, to stoop to menial tricks, and this mixture of ruin and nobility in one person is out of harmony with nature. It is better to divide among two persons that which is usually found confused clumsily and joined in one. My master and myself, as being one person, are each a part of the other. Would it could be always so! We have all within ourselves a great and splendid gentleman of lofty hopes and towering ideals, capable of everything that is noble and everything that is good — and by his side, a humble servant born to forlorn hopes and miserable and hidden things, who employs himself in the base actions to which we are enforced by life. The art of living is so to separate the two that when we fall into any ignominy we can say: "It was not my fault; it was not I. It was my servant." In the greatest misery to which we sink there is always something in us which rises superior to ourselves. We should despise ourselves too much if we did not believe that we were better than our lives. Of course you know who my master is: he is the one of the towering thoughts, of the lofty, beautiful ideals. Of course you know who I am: I am the one of the forlorn and hidden things, the one who grovels and toils on the ground, delving among falsehood and humiliation and lies. Only there is something in me which redeems me and elevates me in my own eyes. It is the loyalty of my service, this loyalty which humiliates and abases itself that another may fly, that he may always be the lord of the towering thoughts, of the lofty, beautiful ideals.

[*Music is heard in the distance.*]

COLUMBINE. What is this music?

CRISPIN. The music which my master is bringing with him to the fête with all his pages and all the attendants of his train, accompanied by a great court of poets and singers presided over by Signor Harlequin, and an entire legion of soldiers with the Captain at their head, illuminating his coming with torches, with rockets and red fire.

COLUMBINE. Who is your master, that he is able to do so much? I run to tell my lady. . . .

CRISPIN. It will not be necessary. She is here.

[DOÑA SIRENA *enters from the pavilion.*]

SIRENA. What is this? Who has pre-

pared this music? What troop of people is arriving at my door?

COLUMBINE. Ask no questions. Know that to-day a great gentleman has arrived in this city, and it is he who offers you this fête to-night. His servant will tell you everything. I hardly know myself whether I have been talking to a great rogue or a great madman. Whichever it is, I assure you that he is a most extraordinary man.

SIRENA. Then it is not Harlequin?

COLUMBINE. Ask no questions. It is all a work of magic!

CRISPIN. Doña Sirena, my master begs permission to kiss your hand. So great a lady and so noble a gentleman ought not, when they meet, to descend to indignities inappropriate to their state. That is why, before he arrives, I have come to tell you everything. I am acquainted with a thousand notable exploits of your history, which should I but refer to them, would be sufficient to assure me attention. But it might seem impertinence to mention them. [*Handing her a paper.*] My master acknowledges in this paper over his signature the great sum which he will be in your debt should you be able to fulfil upon your part that which he has here the honor to propose.

SIRENA. What paper and what debt is this? [*Reading the paper to herself.*] How? A hundred thousand crowns at once and an equal quantity upon the death of Signor Polichinelle, if your master succeeds in marrying his daughter? What insolence and what infamy have we here? And to a lady! Do you know to whom you are speaking? Do you know what house this is?

CRISPIN. Doña Sirena! Forego your wrath. There is nobody present to warrant such concern. Put that paper away with the others, and let us not refer to the matter again. My master proposes nothing which is improper to you, nor would you consent that he should do so. Whatever may happen hereafter will be the work of chance and of love. I, the servant, was the one who set this unworthy snare. You are ever the noble dame, my master the virtuous cavalier, and as you meet in this festival to-night, you will talk of a thousand gallant and priceless things, as your guests stroll by and whisper enviously in praise of the ladies' beauty and the exquisite artfulness of their dress, the splendor and magnificence of the entertainment, the sweetness of the music, the nimble grace of the dancers' feet. And who is to say that this is not the whole story? Is not life just this — a fête in which the music serves to cover up the words, the words to cover up the thoughts? Then let the music sound, let conversation flash and sparkle with its smiles, let the supper be well served — this is all that concerns the guests. See, here is my master, who comes to salute you in all courtesy.

[LEANDER, HARLEQUIN, *and the* CAPTAIN *enter from the right.*]

LEANDER. Doña Sirena, I kiss your hand.

SIRENA. Sir. . . .

LEANDER. My servant has already told you in my name much more than I myself could say.

CRISPIN. Being a gentleman of discretion, my master is a man of few words. His admiration is mute.

HARLEQUIN. He wisely knows how to admire.

CAPTAIN. True merit.

HARLEQUIN. True valor.

CAPTAIN. The divine art of poesy.

HARLEQUIN. The incomparable science of war.

CAPTAIN. His greatness appears in everything!

HARLEQUIN. He is the noblest gentleman in the world.

CAPTAIN. My sword shall always be at his service.

HARLEQUIN. I shall dedicate my greatest poem to his glory.

CRISPIN. Enough! Enough! You will offend his native modesty. See how he tries to hide himself and slip away. He is a violet.

SIRENA. Surely he has no need to speak for himself who can make others talk like this in his praise.

[*After bows and salutations the men*

all withdraw upon the right, DOÑA SIRENA *and* COLUMBINE *remaining alone.*]

SIRENA. What do you think of this, Columbine?

COLUMBINE. I think that the master is most attractive in his figure and the servant most captivating in his impertinence.

SIRENA. We shall take advantage of them both. For either I know nothing of the world or about men, or else fortune this day has set her foot within my doors.

COLUMBINE. Surely then it must be fortune, for you do know something of the world, and about men — what don't you know!

SIRENA. Here are Risela and Laura, the first to arrive.

COLUMBINE. When were they the last at anything? I leave them to you; I must not lose sight of our cavalier.

[*She goes out to the right.*]

[LAURA *and* RISELA *enter.*]

SIRENA. My dears! Do you know, I was beginning to worry already for fear that you would not come?

LAURA. What? Is it really so late?

SIRENA. Naturally it is late before I worry about you.

RISELA. We were obliged to disappoint at two other fêtes so as not to miss yours.

LAURA. Though we understood that you might not be able to give it to-night. We heard that you were indisposed.

SIRENA. If only to rebuke gossipers I should have given it though I had died.

RISELA. And we should have been present at it even though we had died.

LAURA. But of course you have not heard the news?

RISELA. Nobody is talking of anything else.

LAURA. A mysterious personage has arrived in the city. Some say that he is a secret ambassador from Venice or from France.

RISELA. Others say that he has come to seek a wife for the Grand Turk.

LAURA. They say he is beautiful as an Adonis.

RISELA. If we could only manage to meet him! — What a pity! You ought to have invited him to your fête.

SIRENA. It was not necessary, my dears. He himself sent an ambassador begging permission to come. He is now in my house, and I have not the slightest doubt but that you will be talking to him soon.

LAURA. What is that? I told you that we made no mistake when we came. Something was sure to happen.

RISELA. How we shall be envied to-night!

LAURA. Everybody is mad to know him.

SIRENA. It was no effort for me. It was sufficient for him to hear that I was receiving in my house.

RISELA. Of course — the old story. No person of importance ever arrives in the city, but it seems he runs at once and pays his attentions to you.

LAURA. I am impatient to see him. Lead us to him, on your life!

RISELA. Yes! Take us where he is.

SIRENA. I beg your pardons — Signor Polichinelle arriving with his family. But, my dears, you will not wait. You need no introductions.

RISELA. Certainly not! Come, Laura.

LAURA. Come, Risela, before the crowd grows too great and it is impossible to get near.

[LAURA *and* RISELA *go out to the right.*]

[POLICHINELLE, *the* WIFE OF POLICHINELLE, *and* SILVIA *enter.*]

SIRENA. O, Signor Polichinelle! I was afraid you were not coming. Until now I really did not know whether or not I was to have a fête!

POLICHINELLE. It was not my fault; it was my wife's. With forty gowns to select from, she can never make up her mind which to put on.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. Yes, if I were to please him I should make an exhibition of myself. Any suggestion will do. As it is, you see that I have really not had time to put on anything.

SIRENA. But you never were more beautiful!

POLICHINELLE. Well, she is not display

ing one-half of her jewels. If she were, she could not support the weight of the treasure.

SIRENA. Who has a better right to be proud than you have, Signor Polichinelle? What your wife displays are the riches which you have acquired by your labor.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. I tell him this is the time to enjoy them. He ought to be ambitious and seek to rise in the world. Instead, all he thinks about is how he can marry his daughter to some trader.

SIRENA. O, Signor Polichinelle! Your daughter deserves a great deal better than a trader. Surely you hold your daughter far too high for trade. Such a thing is not to be thought of for one moment. You have no right to sacrifice her heart to a bargain. What do you say, Silvia?

POLICHINELLE. She would prefer some waxed-up dandy. Instead of listening to my advice, she reads novels and poetry. It disgusts me.

SILVIA. I always do as my father says, unless it is displeasing to my mother or distasteful to me.

SIRENA. You speak very sensibly.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. Her father has an idea that there is nothing but money to be had in the world.

POLICHINELLE. I have an idea that without money there is nothing to be had out of the world. Money is the one thing which counts. It buys everything.

SIRENA. Oh, I cannot hear you talk like that! What of virtue, what of intelligence, what of noble blood?

POLICHINELLE. They all have their price. You know it. And nobody knows it better than I do, for I have bought heavily in those lines, and found them reasonable.

SIRENA. O, Signor Polichinelle! You are in a playful humor this evening. You know very well that money will not buy everything, and if your daughter should fall in love with some noble gentleman, you would not dream of attempting to oppose her. I can see that you have a father's heart.

POLICHINELLE. I have. I would do anything for my daughter.

SIRENA. Even ruin yourself?

POLICHINELLE. That would not be anything for my daughter. Why, I would steal first, rob, murder — anything. . . .

SIRENA. I felt sure that you must know some way to recoup yourself. But the fête is crowded already! Come with me, Silvia. I have picked out a handsome gentleman to dance with you. You will make a striking couple — ideal!

[*All go out upon the right except* SIGNOR POLICHINELLE, *who is detained as he is about to do so by* CRISPIN, *who enters and accosts him.*]

CRISPIN. Signor Polichinelle! With your permission. . . . A word with you. . . .

POLICHINELLE. Who calls me? What do you want?

CRISPIN. You don't remember me? It is not surprising. Time blots out everything, and when what has been blotted out was unpleasant, after a while we do not remember even the blot, but hurry and paint over it with bright colors, like these with which you now hide your capers from the world. Why, when I knew you, Signor Polichinelle, you had hard work to cover your nakedness with a couple of muddy rags!

POLICHINELLE Who are you and where did you know me?

CRISPIN. I was a mere boy then; you were a grown man. But you cannot have forgotten so soon all those glorious exploits on the high seas, all those victories gained over the Turks, to which we contributed not a little with our heroic strength, both pulling chained at the same noble oar in the same victorious galley?

POLICHINELLE. Impudent scoundrel! Silence, or —

CRISPIN. Or you will do with me as you did with your first master in Naples, or with your first wife in Bologna, or with that usurious Jew in Venice?

POLICHINELLE. Silence! Who are you who know so much and talk so freely?

CRISPIN. I am — what you were. One who will come to be what you are — as you have done. Not with the same violence as you, for these are other days and only madmen commit murder now, and

lovers, and poor ignorant wretches who fall armed upon the wayfarer in dark alleys or along the solitary highway. Despicable gallows-birds! Negligible!

POLICHINELLE. What do you want of me? Money, is it not? Well, we can meet again; this is not the place. . . .

CRISPIN. Do not trouble yourself about your money. I only want to be your friend, your ally, as in those days.

POLICHINELLE. What can I do for you?

CRISPIN. Nothing; for to-day I am the one who is going to do for you, and oblige you with a warning. [*Directing him to look off upon the right.*] Do you see your daughter there — how she is dancing with that young gentleman? How coyly she blushes at his gallant compliments! Well, that gentleman is my master.

POLICHINELLE. Your master? Then he must be an adventurer, a rogue, a blackguard, like . . .

CRISPIN. Like us, you were going to say? No, he is more dangerous than we, because, as you see, he has a fine figure, and there is a mystery and an enchantment in his glance and a sweetness in his voice which go straight to the heart, and which stir it as at the recital of some sad tale. Is not this enough to make any woman fall in love? Never say that I did not warn you. Run and separate your daughter from this man and never permit her to dance with him again, no, nor to speak to him, so long as she shall live.

POLICHINELLE. Do you mean to say that he is your master and is this the way you serve him?

CRISPIN. Are you surprised? Have you forgotten already how it was when you were a servant? And I have not planned to assassinate him yet.

POLICHINELLE. You are right. A master is always despicable. But what interest have you in serving me?

CRISPIN. To come safe into some good port, as we often did when we rowed together at the oar. Then sometimes you used to say to me: "You are stronger than I, row for me." In this galley in which we are to-day, you are stronger than I. Row for me, for your faithful friend of other days, for life is a horrible vile galley and I have rowed so long.

[*He goes out by the way he came in.*]

[DOÑA SIRENA, *the* WIFE OF POLICHINELLE, RISELA, *and* LAURA *re-enter.*]

LAURA. Only Doña Sirena could have given such a fête!

RISELA. To-night she has outstripped all the others.

SIRENA. The presence of so distinguished a gentleman was an added attraction.

POLICHINELLE. But Silvia? Where is Silvia? What have you done with my daughter?

SIRENA. Do not disturb yourself, Signor Polichinelle. Your daughter is in excellent hands, and you may rest assured that she will remain in them as long as she is in my house.

RISELA. There were no attentions for any one but her.

LAURA. All the smiles were for her.

RISELA. And all the sighs!

POLICHINELLE. Whose? This mysterious gentleman's? I do not like it. This must stop —

SIRENA. But Signor Polichinelle!

POLICHINELLE. Away! Let me be! I know what I am doing. [*He rushes out.*]

SIRENA. What is the matter? What infatuation is this?

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. Now you see what sort of man he is. He is going to commit an outrage on that gentleman. He wants to marry his daughter to a trader, does he — a clinker of worthless coin? He wants to make her unhappy for the rest of her life.

SIRENA. No, anything rather than that! Remember — you are her mother and this is the time for you to interpose your authority.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. Look! He has spoken to him and the cavalier drops Silvia's hand and retires, hanging his head.

LAURA. And now Signor Polichinelle is attacking your daughter!

SIRENA. Come! Come! Such conduct cannot be tolerated in my house.

RISELA. Signora Polichinelle, in spite of your riches you are an unfortunate woman.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. Would you believe it, he even forgets himself so far sometimes as to turn upon me?

LAURA. Is it possible? And are you a woman to submit to that?

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. He makes it up afterward by giving me a handsome present.

SIRENA. Well, there are husbands of my acquaintance who never even think of making up. . . . [*They all go out.*]

[LEANDER *and* CRISPIN *enter.*]

CRISPIN. What is this sadness, this dejection? I expected to find you in better spirits.

LEANDER. I was never unfortunate till now; at least it never mattered to me whether or not I was unfortunate. Let us fly, Crispin, let us fly from this city before any one can discover us and find out who we are.

CRISPIN. If we fly it will be after every one has discovered us and they are running after us to detain us and bring us back in spite of ourselves. It would be most discourteous to depart with such scant ceremony without bidding our attentive friends good-by.

LEANDER. Do not jest, Crispin; I am in despair.

CRISPIN. So you are. And just when our hopes are under fullest sail.

LEANDER. What could you expect? You wanted me to pretend to be in love, but I have not been able to pretend it.

CRISPIN. Why not?

LEANDER. Because I love — I love in spirit and in truth!

CRISPIN. Silvia? Is that what you are complaining about?

LEANDER. I never believed it possible a man could love like this. I never believed that I could ever love. Through all my wandering life along the dusty roads, I was not only the one who passed, I was the one who fled, the enemy of the harvest and the field, the enemy of man, enemy of sunshine and the day. Sometimes the fruit of the wayside tree, stolen, not given, left some savor of joy on my parched lips, and sometimes, after many a bitter day, resting at night beneath the stars, the calm repose of heaven would invite and soothe me to a dream of something that might be in my life like that calm night sky, brooding infinite over my soul — serene! And so to-night, in the enchantment of this fête, it seemed to me as if there had come a calm, a peace into my life — and I was dreaming! Ah! How I did dream! But to-morrow it will be again the bitter flight with justice at our heels, and I cannot bear that they should take me here where she is, and where she may ever have cause to be ashamed at having known me.

CRISPIN. Why, I thought that you had been received with favor! And I was not the only one who noticed it. Doña Sirena and our good friends, the Captain and the poet, have been most eloquent in your praises. To that rare excellent mother, the Wife of Polichinelle, who thinks of nothing but how she can relate herself by marriage to some nobleman, you have seemed the son-in-law of her dreams. As for Signor Polichinelle . . .

LEANDER. He knows . . . he suspects. . . .

CRISPIN. Naturally. It is not so easy to deceive Signor Polichinelle as it is an ordinary man. An old fox like him has to be cheated truthfully. I decided that the best thing for us to do was to tell him everything.

LEANDER. How so?

CRISPIN. Obviously. He knows me of old. When I told him that you were my master, he rightly supposed that the master must be worthy of the man. And upon my part, in appreciation of his confidence, I warned him not to permit you under any circumstances to come near to or speak with his daughter.

LEANDER. You did? Then what have I to hope?

CRISPIN. You are a fool! Why, that Signor Polichinelle will exert all his authority to prevent you from meeting her.

LEANDER. I do not understand.

CRISPIN. In that way he will become our most powerful ally, for if he opposes it, that will be enough to make his wife take the opposite side, and the daughter will fall in love with you madly. You have no

idea what a young and beautiful daughter of a rich father, who has been brought up to the gratification of her every whim, can do when she finds out for the first time in her life that somebody is opposing her wishes. I am certain that this very night, before the fête is over, she will find some way of eluding the vigilance of her father at whatever cost, and return to speak with you.

LEANDER. But can't you see that Signor Polichinelle is nothing to me, no, nor the wide world either? It is she, only she! It is to her that I am unwilling to appear unworthy or mean, it is to her — to her that I cannot lie.

CRISPIN. Bah! Enough of this nonsense! Don't tell me that. It is too late to draw back. Think what will happen if we vacillate now and hesitate in going on. You say that you have fallen in love? Well, this real love will serve us better than if it were put on. Otherwise you would have wanted to get through with it too quickly. If insolence and effrontery are the only qualities which are of use elsewhere, in love a faint suggestion of timidity is of advantage to a man. Timidity in a man always makes the woman bolder. If you don't believe it, here is the innocent Silvia now, skulking in the shadows and only waiting for a chance to come near until I retire or am concealed.

LEANDER. Silvia, do you say?

CRISPIN. Hush! You may frighten her. When she is with you, remember, discretion — only a few words, very few. Adore her, admire her, contemplate her, and let the enchantment of this night of pallid blue speak for you, propitious as it is to love, and whisper to her in the music whose soft notes die away amid the foliage and fall upon our ears like sad overtones of this festival of joy.

LEANDER. Do not trifle, Crispin! Do not trifle with my love! It will be my death.

CRISPIN. Why should I trifle with it? I know, too, it is not always well to grovel on the ground. Sometimes we must soar and mount up into the sky better to dominate the earth. Mount now and soar — and I will grovel still. The world lies in our hands! [*He goes out to the right.*]

[SILVIA *enters.*]

LEANDER. Silvia!

SILVIA. Is it you? You must pardon me. I did not expect to find you here.

LEANDER. I fly from the festival. I am saddened by this joy.

SILVIA. What? You, too?

LEANDER. Too, do you say? Does joy sadden you, too?

SILVIA. My father is angry with me. He never spoke to me like this before. And he was discourteous to you. Will you forgive him?

LEANDER. Yes. I forgive him everything. But you must not make him angry upon my account. Return to the company. They will be looking for you. If they find you here with me . . .

SILVIA. You are right. But you must come, too. Why should you be so sad?

LEANDER. No, I must slip away without anybody seeing me, without their knowing I am gone. I must go far away.

SILVIA. What? But you have important business in the city. I know you have. . . . You will have to stay a long, long time.

LEANDER. No, no! Not another day, not another hour!

SILVIA. But then . . . You have not lied to me?

LEANDER. Lied? No! Don't say that I have lied! No; this is the one truth of my whole life — this dream from which there should be no awakening!

[*The music of a song is heard in the distance, continuing until the curtain falls.*]

SILVIA. It is Harlequin, singing. . . . What is the matter? You are crying. Is it the music which makes you cry? Why will you not tell me what it is that makes you cry?

LEANDER. What makes me cry? The song will tell you. Listen to the song!

SILVIA. We can hear only the music; the words are lost, it is so far away. But don't you know it? It is a song to the silence of the night. It is called the "Kingdom of the Soul." You must know it.

LEANDER. Say it over to me.
SILVIA:
The amorous night above the silent lover
Across the blue heaven spreads a nuptial veil.
The night has strewn its diamonds on the cover
Of a moonlit sky in drowsy August pale.
The garden in the shade now knows no color,
Deep in the shadow of its obscurity
Lightly the leaflets flutter, sweetly smells the flower,
And love broods there in silent sympathy.

You voices which sigh, you voices which sing,
You voices which whisper sweet phrases of love,
Intruders you are and a blasphemous thing,
Like an oath at night-tide in a prayer sped above.
Great Spirit of Silence, whom I adore,
There is in your silence the ineffable voice
Of those who have died loving in silence of yore,
Of those who were silent and died of their love;
Of those in their lives whose great love was such
They were unable to tell it, their love was so much!
Yours are the voices which nightly I hear,
Whispers of love and eternity near.

Mother of my soul, the light of this star,
Is it not the light of your eyes,
Which, like a drop of God's blood,
Trembles in the night
And fades at sunrise?
Tell him whom I love, I never shall love
More than him on the earth,
And when he fades away, light of my eyes,
I shall kiss at sunrise
But the light of thy star!
LEANDER:
Mother of my soul, I never have loved
More than you on the earth.
And when you fade away, light of my eyes,
I shall kiss at sunrise
The light of thy star.

[*They remain in silence, embracing and gazing into each other's eyes.*]

CRISPIN. [*Who appears at the right — to himself.*]
Poesy and night and madness of the lover . . .
All has to serve us that to our net shall come.
The victory is sure! Courage, charge and over!
Who shall overcome us when love beats the drum?

[SILVIA *and* LEANDER *move slowly off to the right, locked in each other's arms.* CRISPIN *follows them in silence, without being seen. Slowly the*

CURTAIN DESCENDS]

THE THIRD ACT

A room in LEANDER'S *house.*

[CRISPIN, *the* CAPTAIN, *and* HARLEQUIN *enter from the right.*]

CRISPIN. Enter, gentlemen, and be seated. Will you take something? Let me give orders to have it brought. Hello there! Ho!

CAPTAIN. No! By no means! We can accept nothing.

HARLEQUIN. We came merely to offer our services to your master after what we have just heard.

CRISPIN. Incredible treachery, which, believe me, shall not be suffered to remain unpunished! I promise you if Signor Polichinelle ever puts himself within the reach of my hands —

HARLEQUIN. Ah! Now you see what an advantage is possessed by us poets! I have him always within the reach of my verses. Oh! What a terrible satire I am thinking of writing against him! The cut-throat! Old reprobate!

CAPTAIN. But you say your master was not so much as even wounded?

CRISPIN. It might have killed him just the same. Imagine! Set upon by a dozen

ruffians absolutely without warning. . . . Thanks, though, to his bravery, to his skill, to my cries . . .

HARLEQUIN. Do you say that it happened at night as your master was talking to Silvia over the wall of her garden?

CRISPIN. Naturally, my master had already been advised of what might happen. But you know what sort of man he is. He is not a person to be deterred by anything.

CAPTAIN. He ought to have notified us, however.

HARLEQUIN. He ought, certainly, to have notified the Captain. He would have been delighted to have lent his aid.

CRISPIN. You know what my master is. He is a host in himself.

CAPTAIN. But you say that he caught one of the ruffians by the nape of the neck, and the rascal confessed that it had all been planned and arranged by Signor Polichinelle beforehand so as to rid himself of your master?

CRISPIN. Who else could have had any interest in it? His daughter is in love with my master; her father wants to marry her to suit himself. My master is opposing his plans, and Signor Polichinelle has known all his life how to get rid of disturbances. Didn't he become a widower twice in a very short time? Has n't he inherited all that his relatives had, irrespective of age, whether they were older or younger than he? Everybody knows it; nobody will say that I do him injustice. Ah! the riches of Signor Polichinelle are an affront to our intelligence, a discouragement to honest labor. A man like Signor Polichinelle could remain rich only among a base and degenerate people.

HARLEQUIN. I agree with you. I intend to say all this in my satire — of course, without mentioning names. Poetry does not admit of such license.

CRISPIN. Much good, then, your satire will do!

CAPTAIN. Leave him to me! Leave him to me! I promise you if he once puts himself within the reach of my sword — ah! But I am confident that he never will.

CRISPIN. My master would never consent to have an insult offered to Signor Polichinelle. After all, he is Silvia's father. The point is to let people in the city understand that an attempt has been made to assassinate my master. Is that old fox to be allowed to stifle the honest affection, the generous passion of his daughter? It is impossible.

HARLEQUIN. It is impossible. Love will find a way.

CRISPIN. If my master had been some impecunious beggar . . . Tell me, is n't Signor Polichinelle the one who ought to be congratulated that my master has condescended to fall in love with his daughter, and is willing to accept him for his father-in-law? — my master, who has rejected the advances of so many damsels of high degree; my master, for whom over four princesses have committed I know not how many absurdities! But who is here? [*Looking toward the right.*] Ah, Columbine! Come in, my beautiful Columbine! Do not be afraid. [COLUMBINE *enters from the right.*] We are all your friends, and our mutual friendship will protect you from our mutual admiration.

COLUMBINE. Doña Sirena has sent me for news of your master. It was scarcely day when Silvia came to our house and confided everything that had happened to my mistress. She says that she will never return to her father, nor leave my mistress, unless it is to become the bride of Signor Leander.

CRISPIN. Does she say that? O, noble girl! O, constant, true-hearted lover!

HARLEQUIN. What an epithalamium I shall write for their wedding!

COLUMBINE. Silvia is positive that Leander is wounded. She heard the clash of swords beneath the balcony, your cries for help; then she fell senseless and they found her in a swoon at daybreak. Tell me how Signor Leander is, for she is beside herself with anxiety to hear, and my lady also is much distressed.

CRISPIN. Tell her that my master escaped with his life only through the unutterable power of love. Tell her that he is dying now only from the incurable wounds of love. Tell her that to the last . . . [*Seeing* LEANDER *approach.*] Ah, but here he

is himself, and he will be able to give you later news than I.

[LEANDER *enters.*]

CAPTAIN. [*Embracing him.*] My dear, good friend!

HARLEQUIN. [*Embracing him.*] My friend and master!

COLUMBINE. Ah, Signor Leander, what happiness! You are safe!

LEANDER. What? How did you know?

CRISPIN. Nothing else is talked about in the city. People gather in groups in the squares murmuring vengeance and venting imprecations upon Signor Polichinelle.

LEANDER. What is this?

CAPTAIN. He had better not dare to attempt your life a second time.

HARLEQUIN. He had better not dare to attempt to arrest the true course of your love.

COLUMBINE. It would be useless. Silvia is in my mistress's house and she swears that she will leave it only to become your bride.

LEANDER. Silvia in your house? But her father . . .

COLUMBINE. Signor Polichinelle has all he can do to look after himself.

CAPTAIN. What? I knew that man would be up to something. Oh, of what base uses money is capable!

HARLEQUIN. It is capable of everything but love; of that it is incapable.

COLUMBINE. He tried to have you assassinated dishonorably in the dark.

CRISPIN. By twelve cutthroats. Twelve! I counted them.

LEANDER. I made out only three or four.

CRISPIN. My master will end by telling you that there was no danger so as not to receive credit for his coolness and his bravery — but I saw it. There were twelve; twelve armed to the teeth, prepared to do murder. It seemed impossible that he could escape with his life.

COLUMBINE. I must run and calm Silvia and my mistress.

CRISPIN. Listen, Columbine. As to Silvia — would n't it be as well, perhaps, not to calm her?

COLUMBINE. Leave that to my mistress. Silvia is convinced that your master is dead, and although Doña Sirena is making the most unheard-of efforts to console her, it will not be long before she is here in spite of the consequences.

CRISPIN. I ought to have known of what your mistress was capable.

CAPTAIN. We must be going, too; there is nothing here that we can do. The point is to arouse the indignation of the people against Signor Polichinelle.

HARLEQUIN. We shall stone his house; we shall raise the whole city. Until to-day not a single man has dared to lift his hand against him; to-day we will all dare to do it together. There is an uplift, a moral earnestness in a crowd.

COLUMBINE. He will come creeping on his knees and beg you to accept his daughter as your wife.

CRISPIN. Yes, yes, he will indeed! Run, friends, run! The life of my master is not secure. A man who has once made up his mind to assassinate him is not likely to be turned aside for a trifle.

CAPTAIN. Have no fear, my good friend.

HARLEQUIN. My friend and master!

COLUMBINE. Signor Leander!

LEANDER. Thanks to you all, my friends. My loyal friends!

[*All go out but* LEANDER *and* CRISPIN.]

LEANDER. What is this, Crispin? What are you trying to do? Where do you expect to come out with all your lies? Do you know what I believe? You paid those fellows yourself; it was your idea. I should have got off badly enough among so many if they had been in earnest.

CRISPIN. Have you the temerity to reproach me when I precipitate the fulfilment of your desires so skilfully?

LEANDER. No, Crispin, no. You know you do not. I love Silvia. I am resolved: I shall never win her love through deception, come what may.

CRISPIN. You know very well, then, what will come. Do you call it love to sit down and resign yourself to losing what you love for the sake of these quibbles of conscience? Silvia herself would not thank you for it.

LEANDER. What do you mean? If she once learns who I am . . .

CRISPIN. By the time she finds out you will no longer be the one that you are. You will be her husband then, her beloved husband, who is everything that is noble and faithful and true, and whatever else you like besides, or that her heart desires. Once you are master of her heart — and her fortune — will you not be a complete and perfect gentleman? You will not be like Signor Polichinelle, who, with all his wealth which permits him so many luxuries, has not yet been able to permit himself the luxury of being honest. Deceit is natural to him, but with you it was only necessity. If you had not had me at your side you would have starved to death before this out of pure conscientiousness. Ah! do you suppose that if I had thought for one moment that you were a man of another sort, I would have been satisfied to devote your abilities to love? No, I would have put you into politics, and not merely the fortune of Signor Polichinelle would have been ours, but a chastened and admiring world. But you are not ambitious. You will be satisfied to be happy.

LEANDER. But can't you see that no good, no happiness, can come out of this? If I could lie so as to make her love me and in that way become rich, then it could only be because I did not love. And if I did not love, then how could I be happy? And if I love, how can I lie?

CRISPIN. Don't lie, then. Love, love passionately, entirely, with your whole heart and soul. Put your love before everything else upon earth. Guard and protect it. A lover does not lie when he keeps to himself what he thinks might prejudice the blind affection of his mistress.

LEANDER. These are subtleties, Crispin.

CRISPIN. Which you would have known all about before if you had really been in love. Love is all subtleties and the greatest subtlety of them all is not that lovers deceive others — it is that they can so easily deceive themselves.

LEANDER. I do not deceive myself, Crispin. I am not one of those men who, when they have sold their conscience, think that they have also been able to dispose of their intelligence as well.

CRISPIN. That is the reason I said you would never make a good politician. You are right. For the intelligence is the conscience of truth, and the man who parts with that among the lies of this life is as one who has lost himself. He is without compass or sail. He will never be able to find himself again, nor know himself, but become in all his being just one more living lie.

LEANDER. Where did you learn all these things, Crispin?

CRISPIN. I meditated a little while in the galleys, where this conscience of my intelligence accused me of having been more of a fool than a knave. If I had had more knavery and less stupidity, instead of rowing I might have commanded the ship. So I swore never again to return to the oar. You can see now what I am willing to do for your sake since I am on the point of breaking my oath.

LEANDER. In what way?

CRISPIN. Our situation has become desperate. We have exhausted our credit, and our dupes begin to demand something more substantial than talk: the innkeeper who entertained us so long with such munificence, expecting that you would receive your remittances; Signor Pantaloon, who, hearing of the credit extended by the innkeeper, advanced us whatever was necessary to install us sumptuously in this house; tradesmen of every description, who did not hesitate to provide us with every luxury, dazzled by such display; Doña Sirena herself, who has lent us her invaluable good offices in your love affair — they have all only asked what was reasonable; it would be unjust to expect more of them or to complain of such delightful people. The name of this fair city shall ever be engraven upon my heart in letters of gold. From this hour I claim it as my adopted mother! But more than this, have you forgotten that they have been searching for us in other parts and following on our heels? Can it be that all those glorious exploits of Mantua and Florence have been forgotten? Don't you recall that

famous lawsuit in Bologna? Three thousand two hundred pages of testimony already admitted against us before we withdrew in alarm at the sight of such prodigious expansive ability! Do you imagine that it has not continued to grow under the pen of that learned doctor and jurist, who has taken it under his wing? How many whereases and therefores must there now be therefore, whereas they are all there for no good? Do you still doubt? Do you still hesitate and reprove me because I give the battle to-day which is to decide our fate forever at a single blow?

LEANDER. Let us fly!

CRISPIN. No! Let the despairing fly! This day decides. We challenge fortune. I have given you love; give me life!

LEANDER. But how can we save ourselves? What can I do? Tell me.

CRISPIN. Nothing yet. It will be enough to accept what others offer. We have intertwined ourselves with the interests of many, and the bonds of interest will prove our salvation.

[DOÑA SIRENA *enters.*]

SIRENA. Have I your permission, Signor Leander?

LEANDER. Doña Sirena! What? You in my house?

SIRENA. I am conscious of the risk I am running — the gossip of evil tongues. What? Doña Sirena in the house of a young and gallant gentleman?

CRISPIN. My master will know how to avoid all cause of scandal, if any indeed could attach to your name.

SIRENA. Your master? I would not trust him. Men are so boastful! But it is idle to anticipate. What, sir, is this talk about an attempt to kill you last night? I have not heard another thing since I got up in the morning. And Silvia! The poor child! How she loves you! I would give a great deal to know what it was that you did to make her fall in love with you like that.

CRISPIN. My master feels that it was what you did. He owes it all to you.

SIRENA. I should be the last one to deny that he owes me anything. I have always tried to speak well of him — a thing I had no right to do, not knowing him sufficiently. I have gone to great lengths in his service. Now if you are false to your promise . . .

CRISPIN. You do not doubt my master? Have you not the papers signed in his own hand?

SIRENA. The hand is a good one and so is the name. I don't bother about them. I know what it is to trust, and I know that Signor Leander will pay me what he owes. But to-day has been a bitter day for me, and if you could let me have to-day one-half of what you have promised, I would willingly forego the other half.

CRISPIN. To-day, do you say?

SIRENA. A day of tribulation! And what makes it worse, it is twenty years ago to-day that my second husband died, who was my first — yes, my only love.

CRISPIN. May he rest in peace with all the honors of the first!

SIRENA. The first was forced upon me by my father. I never loved him, but in spite of it he insisted upon being faithful to me.

CRISPIN. What knowledge you have of men, Doña Sirena!

SIRENA. But let us leave these recollections, which are depressing, and turn to hope. Would you believe it? Silvia insisted upon coming with me.

LEANDER. Here? To this house?

SIRENA. Where do you suppose it was that she insisted upon coming? What do you say to that? What would Signor Polichinelle say? With all the city roused against him, there would be nothing for him to do but to have you marry.

LEANDER. No, no! Don't let her come. . . .

CRISPIN. Hush! You know my master has a way of not saying what he means.

SIRENA. I know. What would he give to see Silvia at his side, never to be separated from him more?

CRISPIN. What would he give? You don't know what he would give!

SIRENA. That is the reason I ask.

CRISPIN. Ah, Doña Sirena! If my master becomes the husband of Silvia to-day, to-day he will pay you everything that he has promised you.

SIRENA. And if he does not?

CRISPIN. Then you lose everything. Suit yourself.

LEANDER. Silence, Crispin, silence! Enough! I cannot submit to have my love treated as a bargain. Go, Doña Sirena! Say to Silvia that she must return to her father's house, that under no circumstances is she ever to enter mine; that she must forget me forever. I shall fly and hide myself in the desert places of the earth, where no man shall see me, no, nor so much as know my name. My name? I wonder — have I a name?

CRISPIN. Will you be silent?

SIRENA. What is the matter with him? What paroxysm is this? Return to your senses! Come to your proper mind! How? Renounce so glorious an enterprise for nothing? You are not the only person who is to be considered. Remember that there are others who have put their confidence in you. A lady of quality who has exposed herself for your sake is not to be betrayed with impunity. You will do no such thing. You will not be so foolish. You will marry Silvia or there will be one who will find a way to bring you to a reckoning for all your impostures. I am not so defenseless in the world as you may think, Signor Leander.

CRISPIN. Doña Sirena is right. But believe me, this fit of my master's — he is offended by your reproaches, your want of confidence.

SIRENA. I don't want confidence in your master. And I might as well say it — I don't want confidence in Signor Polichinelle. He is not a man to be trifled with, either. After the outcry which you raised against him by your stratagem of last night —

CRISPIN. Stratagem, did you say?

SIRENA. Bah! Everybody knows it. One of the rascals was a relative of mine, and among the others I had connections. Very well, sirs, very well! Signor Polichinelle has not been asleep. It is said in the city that he has given information as to who you are to Justice, and on what grounds you may be apprehended. It is said that a process has arrived to-day from Bologna —

CRISPIN. And a devil of a doctor with it? Three thousand nine hundred folios . . .

SIRENA. So it is said and on good authority. You see that there is no time to lose.

CRISPIN. Who is losing and who is wasting time but you? Return, return at once to your house! Say to Silvia —

SIRENA. Silvia? Silvia is here. She came along with me and Columbine as one of the attendants in my train. She is waiting in the antechamber. I told her that you were wounded horribly.

LEANDER. Oh, my Silvia!

SIRENA. She has reconciled herself to your death. She hopes for nothing else. She expects nothing else. She thinks nothing of what she risks in coming here to see you. Well? Are we friends?

CRISPIN. You are adorable! [*To* LEANDER.] Quick! Lie down here. Stretch yourself out in this chair. Seem sick, suffer, faint — be downhearted. And remember, if I am not satisfied with the appearance, I will substitute the reality!

[*Threatening him and forcing him into a chair.*]

LEANDER. Yes, I am in your power! I see it, I know it! But Silvia shall never be! Yes, let me see her. Tell her to come in. I shall save her in spite of you, in spite of everything, in spite even of herself!

CRISPIN. You know my master has a way of not meaning what he says.

SIRENA. I never thought him such a fool. Come with me.

[*She goes out with* CRISPIN.]

[SILVIA *enters.*]

LEANDER. Silvia! My Silvia!

SILVIA. But are n't you wounded?

LEANDER. No, don't you see? It was a lie, another lie to bring you here. But don't be afraid. Your father will come soon; soon you will leave this house with him without having any cause to reproach me. . . . Ah! None but that I have disturbed the serenity of your soul with an illusion of love which will be to you in the future no more than the remembrance of a dark and evil dream!

SILVIA. But Leander? Then your love was not real?

LEANDER. My love was, yes. That is why I could not deceive you. Leave this place at once — before any but those who brought you here discover that you came.

SILVIA. What are you afraid of? Am I not safe in your house? I was not afraid to come. What harm can happen to me at your side?

LEANDER. You are right. None! My love will protect you even from your innocence.

SILVIA. I can never go back to my father's house — not after the horrible thing which he did last night.

LEANDER. No, Silvia, do not blame your father. It was not his fault; it was another deception, another lie. Fly from me; forget this miserable adventurer, this nameless outcast, a fugitive from justice. . . .

SILVIA. No, it is n't true. No! It is the conduct of my father which makes me unworthy of your love. That is what it is. I see it all now. I understand. Ay, for me!

LEANDER. Silvia! My Silvia! How cruel your sweet words are! How cruel this noble confidence of your heart, so innocent of evil and of life!

[CRISPIN *enters, running.*]

CRISPIN. Master! Master! Signor Polichinelle is coming!

SILVIA. My father!

LEANDER. It does n't matter. I shall lead you to him with my own hand.

CRISPIN. But he is not coming alone. There is a great crowd with him; the officers of justice. . . .

LEANDER. What? Ah! If they should find you here? In my house! [*To* CRISPIN.] I see it all now. You have told them. But you shall not succeed in your design!

CRISPIN. I? No. Certainly not! For this time this is in earnest and nothing can save us now.

LEANDER. No, not us. Nor shall I try. But her . . . Yes! Hide her, conceal her! We must secrete her here.

SILVIA. But you?

LEANDER. Have no fear. Quick! They are on the stair. [*He hides* SILVIA *in a room at the rear, meanwhile saying to* CRISPIN.] See what these fellows want. On your life let no man set his foot within this room after I am gone! . . . The game is up! It is the end for me. [*He runs to the window.*]

CRISPIN. [*Holding him back.*] Master! Master! Hold! Control yourself. Come to your senses. Don't throw your life away!

LEANDER. I am not throwing my life away. . . . There is no escape. . . . I am saving her. . . .

[*He climbs through the window and rapidly up outside and disappears.*]

CRISPIN. Master! Master! H'm! Not so bad after all. I thought he was going to dash himself to pieces on the ground. Instead he has climbed higher. . . . There is hope yet — he may yet learn to fly. It is his region, the clouds. . . . Now I to mine, the firm ground. And more need than ever that I should make certain that it is solid beneath my feet.

[*He seats himself complacently in an armchair.*]

POLICHINELLE. [*Without, to those who are with him.*] Guard the doors! Let no man escape! No, nor woman either. . . . Nor dog nor cat!

INNKEEPER. Where are they? Where are these bandits? These assassins?

PANTALOON. Justice! Justice! My money! My money!

[SIGNOR POLICHINELLE, *the* INNKEEPER, SIGNOR PANTALOON, *the* CAPTAIN, HARLEQUIN, *the* DOCTOR, *the* SECRETARY, *and two* CONSTABLES *enter, bearing in their arms enormous scrolls and protocols, or papers of the suit. All enter from the right in the order named. The* DOCTOR *and the* SECRETARY *pass at once to the table and prepare to take testimony. Such rolls and papers as cannot be accommodated upon the table the two* CONSTABLES *retain in their hands, remaining standing for that purpose at the rear.*]

CAPTAIN. But can this be possible, Crispin?

HARLEQUIN. Is it possible that such a thing can be?

PANTALOON. Justice! Justice! My money! My money!

INNKEEPER. Seize them! Put them in irons!

PANTALOON. Don't let them escape! Don't let them escape!

CRISPIN. What? How is this? Who dares to desecrate with impious clamor the house of a gentleman and a cavalier? Oh, you may congratulate yourselves that my master is not at home!

PANTALOON. Silence! Silence! For you are his accomplice and you will be held to answer to the same reckoning as he.

INNKEEPER. Accomplice, did you say? As guilty as his pretended master! — for he was the one who deceived me.

CAPTAIN. What is the meaning of this, Crispin?

HARLEQUIN. Is there any truth in what these people say?

POLICHINELLE. What have you to say for yourself now, Crispin? You thought you were a clever rogue to cut up your capers with me. I tried to murder your master, did I? I am an old miser who is battening on his daughter's heart? All the city is stirred up against me, is it, heaping me with insults? Well, we shall see.

PANTALOON. Leave him to us, Signor Polichinelle, for this is our affair. After all, you have lost nothing. But I — all my wealth which I lent him without security. I am ruined for the rest of my life. What will become of me?

INNKEEPER. What will become of me, tell me that, when I spent what I never had and even ran into debt so that he might be served — as I thought — in a manner befitting his station? It was my destruction, my ruin.

CAPTAIN. We too were horribly deceived. What will be said of me when it is known that I have put my sword at the disposition of an adventurer?

HARLEQUIN. And of me, when I have dedicated sonnet after sonnet to his praise, just as if he had been any ordinary gentleman?

POLICHINELLE. Ha! Ha! Ha!

PANTALOON. Yes, laugh, laugh, that is right. You have lost nothing.

INNKEEPER. Nobody robbed you.

PANTALOON. To work! To work! Where is the other villain?

INNKEEPER. Better see what there is in the house first.

CRISPIN. Slowly, slowly, gentlemen. If you advance one other step —

[*Threatening them with his sword.*]

PANTALOON. What? You threaten us? Again? Is such a thing to be endured? Justice! Justice!

INNKEEPER. Yes, justice!

DOCTOR. Gentlemen, unless you listen to me we shall get nowhere. No man may take justice into his own hands, inasmuch as justice is not haste nor oppression nor vengeance nor act of malice. *Summum jus, summum injuria;* the more wrong, the more justice. Justice is all wisdom, and wisdom is all order, and order is all reason, and reason is all procedure, and procedure is all logic. Barbara, Celarent, Darii, Ferio, Baralipton, deposit all your wrongs and all your disputations with me, for if they are to be of any validity they must all form a part of this process which I have brought in these protocols with me.

CRISPIN. The devil, you say! Has n't it grown enough already?

DOCTOR. Herein are set down and inscribed divers other offenses of these defendants, whereunto must be added and conjoined each and every one of those of which you may accuse them now. And I must be the advocate in all of them, for that is the only way in which it will be possible for you to obtain satisfaction and justice. Write, Signor Secretary, and let the said complainants depose.

PANTALOON. It might be better to settle our differences among ourselves. You know what justice is.

INNKEEPER. Write nothing. It will only be making the white black, and in the end we shall be left without our money and these rogues without punishment.

PANTALOON. Exactly. My money! My money! And justice afterward.

DOCTOR. You unlearned, you uncivil, you ignorant generation! What do you know of justice? It is not enough for you to say that you have suffered a wrong, unless there be plainly apparent therein an intention to make you suffer that wrong; that is to say, fraud or deceit, which are

not the same, although they are confounded in the popular acceptation. But I say unto you that only in the single case —

PANTALOON. Enough! Enough! You will end by telling us that we are the guilty ones.

DOCTOR. What else am I to think when you persist in denying such a plain and obvious fact?

INNKEEPER. I like that. Good! We were robbed. Do you want any plainer or more obvious fact?

DOCTOR. Know, then, that robbery is not the same as theft, much less is it the same as fraud or deceit, which again are not the same as aforesaid. From the laws of the Twelve Tables down to Justinian, to Tribonian, to Emilian, to Triberian . . .

PANTALOON. We shall be cheated out of our money. There is no one who can reason me out of that.

POLICHINELLE. The Signor Doctor is right. We can safely leave the matter to him and everything will be attended to in the process.

DOCTOR. Then write, Signor Secretary, write.

CRISPIN. Will any one listen to me?

PANTALOON. No one, no one. Let that rascal be quiet! Silence for that villain!

INNKEEPER. You will have a chance to talk soon enough when you don't want to.

DOCTOR. He will speak at the proper moment, for justice requires that everybody should be afforded an opportunity to talk. Write, write: In the city of . . . in the matter of . . . But it would certainly not be amiss if we proceeded first to an inventory of whatever there is in the house.

CRISPIN. [*Before the door.*] It certainly would be a miss. . . .

DOCTOR. Thence to progress to the deposit of security on the part of the complainants, so that there may be no question as to their good faith when they assert that they have suffered a loss. Two thousand crowns will be sufficient from each of you, to be secured by guarantees upon all your goods and chattels.

PANTALOON. What is that? Two thousand crowns from us?

DOCTOR. I ought to make it eight; however, as you are persons of responsibility, I take that fact into account. I allow nothing to escape me.

INNKEEPER. Hold! And write no more! We cannot submit to this.

DOCTOR. What? Do you threaten justice? Open a separate process for battery and the hand of violence raised against an officer of the law in full performance of his duties.

PANTALOON. This man will be the ruin of us.

INNKEEPER. He is mad.

DOCTOR. What? Do you call me a man and mad? Speak with more respect. Write! Write! Open two more counts. There was also an assault by word of mouth. . . .

CRISPIN. Now see what you have done through not listening to me.

PANTALOON. Talk, talk, for heaven's sake! Talk! Anything would be better than what is happening to us now.

CRISPIN. Then shut off this fellow, for the love of mercy! He is raising up a mountain with his protocols.

PANTALOON. Stop! Stop, I say!

INNKEEPER. Put down that pen!

DOCTOR. Let no man dare to raise his hand.

CRISPIN. Signor Captain, then lend us your sword. It also is the instrument of justice.

CAPTAIN. [*Going up to the table and delivering a tremendous blow with his sword upon the papers on which the* DOCTOR *is engaged.*] Have the kindness to desist.

DOCTOR. You see how ready I am to comply with a reasonable request. Suspend the actions. [*They stop writing.*] There is a previous question to be adjudged. The parties dispute among themselves. Nevertheless it will be proper to proceed with the inventory. . . .

PANTALOON. No! No!

DOCTOR. It is a formality which cannot be waived.

CRISPIN. I don't think it would be proper. When the proper time comes you can write as much as you like. But let me have permission first to speak for a moment with these honorable gentlemen.

DOCTOR. If you wish to have what you are about to say recorded as testimony. . . .

CRISPIN. No! By no means. Not a single word, or I shall not open my mouth.

CAPTAIN. Better let the fellow talk.

CRISPIN. What shall I say? What are you complaining about? That you have lost your money? What do you want? To get it back?

PANTALOON. Exactly! Exactly! My money!

INNKEEPER. Our money!

CRISPIN. Then listen to me. Where do you suppose that it is coming from when you insist upon destroying the credit of my master in this fashion, and so make his marriage with the daughter of Signor Polichinelle impossible? Name of Mars! I had rather deal with a thousand knaves than one fool. See what you have done now and how you will be obliged to compound with justice for a half share of what we owe you — I say *owe* you. How will you be any better off if you succeed in sending us to the galleys or to some worse place? Will it put money in your pockets to collect the welts on our skins? Will you be richer or nobler or more powerful because we are ruined? On the other hand, if you had not interrupted us at such an inopportune moment, to-day, this very day, you would have received your money with interest, which God knows is enough to send you all to hang on the gallows to remain suspended forever, if justice were not in these hands — and these pens. Now do as you see fit; I have told you what you ought to do.

DOCTOR. They will remain suspended until further notice.

CAPTAIN. I would never have believed it possible that their crimes could have been so great.

POLICHINELLE. That Crispin. . . . He will be capable of convincing them.

PANTALOON. [*To the* INNKEEPER.] What do you think of this? Looking at it calmly. . . .

INNKEEPER. What do you think?

PANTALOON. You say that your master was to have married the daughter of Signor Polichinelle to-day? But suppose he refuses to give his consent?

CRISPIN. What good would that do him? His daughter has run away with my master. All the world will soon know it. It is more important to him than it is to any one else not to have it known that his daughter has thrown herself away upon a rapscallion, a man without character, a fugitive from justice.

PANTALOON. Suppose this should turn out to be true? What do you think?

INNKEEPER. Better not weaken. The rogue breathes deceit. He is a master.

PANTALOON. You are right. No one can tell how far to believe him. Justice! Justice!

CRISPIN. I warn you — you lose everything!

PANTALOON. Wait! . . . just a moment. We will see. A word with you, Signor Polichinelle.

POLICHINELLE. What do you want with me?

PANTALOON. Suppose that we had made a mistake in this complaint. Suppose that Signor Leander should turn out to be, after all, a noble, virtuous gentleman, incapable of the slightest dishonest thought. . . .

POLICHINELLE. What is that? Say that again.

PANTALOON. Suppose that your daughter was in love with him madly, passionately, even to the point where she had run away with him from your house?

POLICHINELLE. My daughter run away from my house with that man? Who says so? Show me the villain! Where is he?

PANTALOON. Don't get excited. It is only in supposition.

POLICHINELLE. Well, sir, I shall not tolerate it even in supposition.

PANTALOON. Try to listen more calmly. Suppose all this should have happened. Would n't the best thing for you to do be to let them marry?

POLICHINELLE. Marry? I would see them dead first. But it is useless to consider it. I see what you want. You are scheming to recoup yourselves at my expense, you are such rogues yourselves. But it shall not be! It shall not be!

PANTALOON. Take care! We had better not talk about rogues while you are present.

INNKEEPER. Hear! Hear!

POLICHINELLE. Rogues, rogues! — conspiring to impoverish me. But it shall not be! It shall not be!

DOCTOR. Have no fear, Signor Polichinelle. Even though they should be dissuaded and abandon their design, do you suppose that this process will amount to nothing? Do you imagine that one line of what is written in it can ever be blotted out, though two and fifty crimes be alleged therein and proved against them, besides as many more which require no proof?

PANTALOON. What do you say now, Crispin?

CRISPIN. That though all those crimes were proved three times and those that require no proof yet three times more than the others, you would still be losing your money and wasting your time, for we cannot pay what we do not have.

DOCTOR. Not at all. That is not good law. For I have to be paid, whatever happens.

CRISPIN. Then the complainants will have to pay you. We shall have more than we can do to pay our offenses with our backs.

DOCTOR. The rights of justice are inviolable, and the first of them is to attach in its interest whatever there is in this house.

PANTALOON. But what good will that do us? How shall we get anything?

INNKEEPER. Of course not! Don't you see?

DOCTOR. Write, write, for if we were to talk forever we should never arrive at a conclusion which would be more satisfactory.

PANTALOON AND INNKEEPER. No! No! Not a word! Not a word!

CRISPIN. Hear me, first, Signor Doctor! In your ear. . . . Suppose you were to be paid at once, on the spot and without the trouble of all this writing, your . . . what is it that you call them? — crumbs of justice?

DOCTOR. Perquisites of the law.

CRISPIN. Have it your own way. What would you say to that?

DOCTOR. Why, in that case . . .

CRISPIN. Listen: — my master will be rich to-day, influential, if Signor Polichinelle consents to his marrying his daughter. Remember that the young lady is the only child of Signor Polichinelle; remember that my master will be master indeed not only of her . . . Remember. . . .

DOCTOR. H'm! It certainly does deserve to be remembered.

PANTALOON. [*To* CRISPIN.] What does he say?

INNKEEPER. What are you going to do?

DOCTOR. Let me consider. That fellow clearly is not thick-witted. It is easy to see that he is acquainted with legal precedent. For if we remember that the wrong which has been done was purely a pecuniary one, and that every wrong which can be redressed in kind suffers in the reparation the most fitting punishment; if we reflect that in the barbaric and primitive law of vengeance it was written: an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but not a tooth for an eye nor an eye for a tooth, so in the present instance it might be argued a crown for a crown and money for money. He has not taken your lives. Why not? The fact is evidence that he did not wish you to take his in return. He has not insulted your persons, impugned your honor, your reputations. Why not? Plainly because he was not willing to submit to a like indignity from you. Equity is the supremest justice. *Equitas justiciam magna est.* And from the Pandects to Tribonian, including Emilianus Tribonianus. . . .

PANTALOON. Include him. So long as we get our money. . . .

INNKEEPER. So long as he pays us. . . .

POLICHINELLE. What is this nonsense? How can he pay? What is the use of all this talk?

CRISPIN. A great deal of use. As I was saying, you are all deeply interested in saving my master, in saving both of us, for your own advantage, for the common good of all. You, so as not to lose your money; the Signor Doctor so as not to see all this vast store of doctrine go for nothing, which he is heaping up in those sarcophagi of learning; the Signor Captain because

everybody knows that he was the friend of my master, and it would not be creditable to his valor to have it said that he had been the dupe of an adventurer; you, Signor Harlequin, because your poetic dithyrambs would lose all their merit as soon as it became known with what little sense you composed them; you, Signor Polichinelle, my dear old friend, because your daughter is now, in the sight of God and before man, Signor Leander's wife.

POLICHINELLE. You lie! You lie! Impudent rascal! Cutthroat!

CRISPIN. I think then that we had better proceed with the inventory of what there is in the house. Write, write, and let all these gentlemen be our witnesses. We can begin with this apartment.

[*He throws back the tapestry from the door at the rear, and* SILVIA, LEANDER, DOÑA SIRENA, COLUMBINE, *and the* WIFE OF POLICHINELLE *appear, forming a group.*]

PANTALOON AND THE INNKEEPER. Silvia!

CAPTAIN AND HARLEQUIN. Together! Both of them!

POLICHINELLE. Is it possible? What? Are they all against me? My wife and daughter, too? All, all, for my ruin? Seize that man, these women, this impostor, or I with my own hand . . .

PANTALOON. Signor Polichinelle, are you out of your head?

LEANDER. [*Advancing toward the proscenium, accompanied by the others.*] Your daughter came to my house under the protection of Doña Sirena, believing that I was wounded; and I ran immediately in search of your wife, so that she too might be present with her and protect her. Silvia knows who I am, she knows the whole story of my life of misery and wandering, of cheats and deceptions and lies — how it has been utterly vile; and I am sure that no vestige of our dream of love any longer remains in her heart. Take her away from this place, take her away! That is my only request before I deliver myself up into the hands of justice.

POLICHINELLE. The punishment of my daughter shall be my affair, but as for this villain . . . Seize him, I say!

SILVIA. Father! If you do not save him it will be my death. I love him, I shall love him always; I love him now more than I ever did, because his heart is noble. He has been cruelly unfortunate; and he might have made me his by a lie — but he would not lie.

POLICHINELLE. Silence! Silence, foolish, unhappy girl! This is the result of the bringing up of your mother, of her vanity, her hallucinations, of all your romantic reading, your music to the light of the moon.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. Anything would be preferable to having my daughter marry a man like you, to be unhappy afterward all the rest of her life, like her mother. Of what use are my riches to me?

SIRENA. You are right, Signora Polichinelle. Of what use are riches without love?

COLUMBINE. The same use as love without riches.

DOCTOR. Signor Polichinelle, under the circumstances, the only thing for you to do is to let them marry.

PANTALOON. Or there will be a scandal in the city.

INNKEEPER. And everybody will be on his side.

CAPTAIN. And we can never consent to have you use force against your daughter.

DOCTOR. It will have to stand in the process that they were surprised here together.

CRISPIN. And after all, the only trouble with my master was that he had no money; no one could outdo him in nobility of character; your grandchildren will be gentlemen — even if that quality does not extend up to the grandfather.

ALL. Let them marry! Let them marry!

PANTALOON. Or we will all turn upon you.

INNKEEPER. And your history will be brought to light — the secret story of your life. . . .

HARLEQUIN. And you will gain nothing by that.

SIRENA. A lady begs it of you on her

knees, moved to tears by the spectacle of a love so unusual in these days.

COLUMBINE. Which seems more like love in a story.

ALL. Let them marry! Let them marry!

POLICHINELLE. Yes! let them marry in an evil hour. My daughter shall be cut off without dowry and without inheritance. I will ruin my estate rather than that this reprobate . . .

DOCTOR. You certainly will not do anything of the kind, Signor Polichinelle.

PANTALOON. Who ever heard of such nonsense?

INNKEEPER. I should n't think of it for a moment.

HARLEQUIN. What would people say?

CAPTAIN. We could never consent to it.

SILVIA. No, my dear father, I am the one who cannot accept anything. I am the one who must share the poverty of his fate. I love him so.

LEANDER. That is the only condition upon which I can accept your love.

[*All run toward* SILVIA *and* LEANDER.]

DOCTOR. What do you say? Are you crazy?

PANTALOON. Preposterous! Absurd!

INNKEEPER. You are going to accept everything.

HARLEQUIN. You will be happy and you will be rich.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. What? My daughter in poverty? Is this wretch the hangman?

SIRENA. Remember that love is a delicate babe and able to endure but few privations.

DOCTOR. It is clearly illegal. Signor Polichinelle, you will sign a munificent donation immediately as befits a person of your dignity and importance, who is a kind and loving father. Write, write, Signor Secretary, for this is something to which nobody will object.

ALL. [*Except* POLICHINELLE.] Write! Write!

DOCTOR. And you, my dear, my innocent young lovers, resign yourselves to riches. You have no right to carry your prejudices to an extreme at which they become offensive to others.

PANTALOON. [*To* CRISPIN.] Now will you pay us?

CRISPIN. Do you doubt it? But you will have to swear first that Signor Leander never owed you anything. See how he is sacrificing himself upon your account, accepting this money which is repugnant to him.

PANTALOON. We always knew that he was a perfect gentleman.

INNKEEPER. Always.

HARLEQUIN. We all believed it.

CAPTAIN. And we shall continue to maintain our belief.

CRISPIN. Now, Doctor, this process . . . Do you suppose there is waste space enough anywhere in the world for it to be thrown away upon?

DOCTOR. My foresight has provided for everything. All that will be necessary is to change the punctuation. For example, here where it says: "Whereas I depose and declare, not without due sanction of law" . . . take out the comma and it reads: "Whereas I depose and declare not without due sanction of law." And here: "Wherefore he is not without due judgment condemned" . . . put in a comma and it reads: "Wherefore he is not, without due judgment condemned." . . .

CRISPIN. O excellent comma! O wonderful, O marvellous comma! Stupendous Genius and Miracle of Justice! Oracle of the Law! Thou Monster of Jurisprudence!

DOCTOR. Now I can rely upon the generosity of your master.

CRISPIN. You can. Nobody knows better than you do how money will change a man.

SECRETARY. I was the one who put in and took out the commas.

CRISPIN. While you are waiting for something better, pray accept this chain. It is of gold.

SECRETARY. H'm! How many carats fine?

CRISPIN. You ought to know. You understand commas and carats.

POLICHINELLE. I impose only one condition: — that this rogue leave your service forever.

CRISPIN. That will not be necessary,

Signor Polichinelle. Do you suppose that I am so poor in ambition as my master?

LEANDER. What? You are not going to leave me, Crispin? It will not be without sorrow on my part.

CRISPIN. It will not last long. I can be of no further use to you. With me you will be able to lay aside your lion's skin and your old man's wisdom. What did I tell you, sir? Between them all we were sure to be saved. And believe me now, when you are getting on in the world, the ties of love are as nothing to the bonds of interest.

LEANDER. You are wrong. For without the love of Silvia I should never have been saved.

CRISPIN. And is love a slight interest? I have always given due credit to the ideal and I count upon it always. With this the farce ends.

SILVIA. [*To the audience.*] You have seen in it how these puppets have been moved by plain and obvious strings, like men and women in the farces of our lives — strings which were their interests, their passions, and all the illusions and petty miseries of their state. Some are pulled by the feet to lives of restless and weary wandering; some by the hands, to toil with pain, to struggle with bitterness, to strike with cunning, to slay with violence and rage. But into the hearts of all there descends sometimes from heaven an invisible thread, as if it were woven out of the sunlight and the moonbeams, the invisible thread of love, which makes these men and women, as it does these puppets which seem like men, almost divine, and brings to our foreheads the smile and splendors of the dawn, lends wings to our drooping spirits, and whispers to us still that this farce is not all a farce, that there is something noble, something divine in our lives which is true and which is eternal, and which shall not close when the farce of life shall close.

CURTAIN

THE LOWER DEPTHS

SCENES FROM RUSSIAN LIFE. IN FOUR ACTS

By MAXIM GORKI

Translated by EDWIN HOPKINS

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

(*In the order in which they first speak in the play*)

A Baron, 32 *years old*
Kvaschnya, *a market woman, about* 40
Bubnoff, *a capmaker,* 45
Kleshtsch, Andrew Mitritch, *locksmith,* 40
Nastiah, 24
Anna, *wife of* Kleshtsch, 30
Sahtin, 40
An Actor, 40
Kostilioff, Michael Ivanowitch, *lodging-house keeper,* 54.
Pepel, Waska, 28.
Natasha, *sister of* Wassilissa, 20
Luka, *a pilgrim,* 60
Alyoschka, *a shoemaker,* 20
Wassilissa Karpovna, *wife of* Kostilioff, 26
Medviedeff, *uncle of* Wassilissa, *policeman,* 50
A Tartar, 40, *a porter*
Krivoi Zoba, 40, *a porter*
Several nameless tramps, supernumeraries

THE LOWER DEPTHS

ACT I

A basement-room resembling a cavern. The massive, vaulted stone ceiling is blackened with smoke, its rough plaster in places broken off. The light falls inwardly from above, through a square window on the left (of one facing the footlights). The left corner, PEPEL'S *quarter, is separated from the rest of the room by thin partitions, against which, extending from beneath the window towards C. is* BUBNOFF'S *bunk.*

In the right corner is a great Russian stove, the rear of which is set into the wall which arches over it, the portion of the stove which extends into the room being an incline up which the personages must scramble to reach the space under the archway.

In the massive wall to the right is a door to the kitchen, in which KVASCHNYA, *the* BARON, *and* NASTIAH *live.*

Below the window, on the left, is a broad bed with dirty cotton curtains. Slightly L. C. (adjoining PEPEL'S *room) a flight of a few steps leads back to a platform, from which, to the left and behind* PEPEL'S *room, lead other steps, to an entry or hallway.*

A door opens inwardly on this platform, while to the right another flight of stairs leads to a room R. U. E. over the stove, in which the proprietor and his family live. The balustrade is in a bad condition and a torn rug or quilt lies over it.

Between the stove and the short flight of steps stands a broad low bench with four legs, which serves as a bunk. Another such bunk is across the front of the stove, and a third is at the right below the door to the kitchen. Near this is a wooden block to which is secured a small anvil and vise. KLESHTSCH *sits on a smaller block, at work on a pair of old locks, into which he is fitting keys. At his feet are two bundles of keys of various sizes, strung on wire hoops, and a damaged samovar (a tea urn commonly used in Russia), a hammer and some files.*

In the middle of the room a great table, two benches, and a heavy tabouret, all unpainted and dirty. KVASCHNYA, *at the table R. cleaning a samovar, acts as housekeeper, while the* BARON *L. C. chews on a piece of black bread, and* NASTIAH *L. sits on the tabouret, her elbows on the table, her face in her hands, reading a tattered book.* ANNA, *in bed, concealed by the curtains, is frequently heard coughing.* BUBNOFF *sits, tailor fashion on his bench, measuring off on a form which he holds between his knees, the pieces of an old pair of trousers which he has ripped up, cutting out caps to the best advantage. Behind him is a smashed hatbox from which he cuts visors, stacking the perfect ones on two nails in the partition and throwing the useless ones about the room. Around him are bits of oilcloth and scraps.*

SAHTIN, *just awakening, on the bunk before the stove, grumbles and roars. On the stove, hidden by the left springer of the arch, the* ACTOR *is heard coughing and turning.*

TIME: *Early Spring. Morning.*

BARON. Go on.

[*Desiring more of the story.*]

KVASCHNYA. Never, I tell you, my friend — take it away. I've been through it all, I want you to know. No treasure could tempt me to marry again.

[SAHTIN *grunts at this.*]

BUBNOFF. [*To* SAHTIN.] What are you grunting about?

KVASCHNYA. I, a free woman, my own boss, shall I register my name in somebody else's passport, become a man's serf, when nobody can say "that" to me now? Don't let me dream about it. I'll never do it. If he were a prince from America — I would n't have him!

KLESHTSCH. You lie.

KVASCHNYA. [*Turning toward him.*] Wh-at! [*Turns back.*]

MARIN UNION
JUNIOR COLLEGE

KLESHTSCH. You are lying. You are going to marry Abram.

BARON. [*Rises, takes* NASTIAH'S *book and reads the title.*] "Disastrous Love."

[*Laughs.*]

NASTIAH. [*Reaches for the book.*] Here! Give it back. Now; stop your joke.

[*The* BARON *eyes her and waves the book in the air.*]

KVASCHNYA. [*To* KLESHTSCH *again.*] You lie, you red-headed billy goat; speaking to me like that, the nerve of it!

BARON. [*Gives* NASTIAH *a blow on the head with the book.*] What a silly goose you are, Nastiah.

NASTIAH. Give it here.

[*Snatches the book.*]

KLESHTSCH. [*To* KVASCHNYA.] You are a great lady! . . . But just the same you'll be Abram's wife . . . That is what you want.

KVASCHNYA. Certainly. [*Spoken ironically.*] To be sure . . . What else . . . And you beating your wife half to death.

KLESHTSCH. [*Furiously.*] Hold your tongue, old slut! What's that to you?

KVASCHNYA. [*Shouting.*] Ah, ha! You can't listen to the truth!

BARON. Now, they're let loose. Nastiah, — where are you?

NASTIAH. [*Without raising her head.*] What? let me alone!

ANNA. [*Putting her head out of the bed curtains.*] It is dawning already. For Heaven's sake! Stop screaming and quarreling.

KLESHTSCH. Croaking again!

[*Contemptuously.*]

ANNA. Every day that God gives, you quarrel. Let me at least die in quiet.

BUBNOFF. The noise is n't keeping you from dying.

KVASCHNYA. [*Goes to* ANNA.] Tell me, Anna dear, how have you endured such a brute?

ANNA. Let me be! Let me —

KVASCHNYA. Now, now, you poor martyr. Still no better with your breast?

BARON. It is time for us to go to market, Kvaschnya.

KVASCHNYA. Then let's go now. [*To* ANNA.] Would you like a cup of hot custard?

ANNA. I don't need it; thank you, though. Why should I still eat?

KVASCHNYA. Oh, eat! Hot food is always good. It is quieting. I will put it away for you in a cup and when your appetite comes, then eat. [*To the* BARON.] Let's go, sir. [*To* KLESHTSCH, *going around him.*] Huh! you Satan!

ANNA. [*Coughing.*] Oh, God!

BARON. [*Jostles* NASTIAH *on the nape of the neck.*] Drop it . . . you goose.

NASTIAH. [*Murmurs.*] Go on. I am not in your way.

[*Turns a page. The* BARON *whistles in derision; crosses to R. Exit into kitchen following* KVASCHNYA.]

SAHTIN. [*Gets up from his bunk.*] Who was it that beat me up yesterday?

BUBNOFF. That's all the same to you.

SAHTIN. Suppose it is. But what for?

BUBNOFF. You played cards?

SAHTIN. Played cards? Oh, so I did.

BUBNOFF. That's why.

SAHTIN. Crooks!

ACTOR. [*On the stove, thrusting his head out.*] They'll kill you once, some day.

SAHTIN. You are — a blockhead!

ACTOR. Why so?

SAHTIN. They could n't kill me twice, could they?

ACTOR. [*After a short silence.*] I don't see it. — Why not?

KLESHTSCH. [*Turning to him.*] Crawl down off the stove and clean the place up! You're too finicky, anyhow.

ACTOR. That's none of your business. . . .

KLESHTSCH. Wait! . . . When Wassilissa comes she will show you whose business it is.

ACTOR. The devil take Wassilissa. The Baron must fix things up today, it's his turn. . . . Baron!

BARON. [*Enters R. from kitchen.*] I have n't time. I must go to market with Kvaschnya.

ACTOR. That's nothing to me . . . Go to the devil for all I care . . . but the floor must be swept up and it's your turn. . . . Don't imagine that I will do somebody else's work.

BARON. [*Crosses to* NASTIAH.] No? Then the deuce take you! Nastengka will sweep up a little. Say! You! "Disastrous Love!" Wake up! [*Takes the book.*]

NASTIAH. [*Rising.*] What do you want? Give it here, you mischief maker. And this is a nobleman!

BARON. [*Gives the book back.*] Nastiah! Do a little bit of sweeping for me — will you?

NASTIAH. [*Goes R. Exit R. into kitchen.*] Sure, I'm crazy to.

KVASCHNYA. [*Within, to the* BARON.] Come along. They can certainly clean up without you. [*Exit* BARON *R.*] You, Actor, you must do it. You were asked to do it, so do it then. It won't break your back.

ACTOR. Now, always I — hm — I can't understand it.

[*The* BARON *enters from the kitchen carrying, by means of a yoke, two baskets containing fat jars covered with rags.*]

BARON. Pretty heavy today.

SAHTIN. You could do that without being a baron.

KVASCHNYA. [*To the* ACTOR.] See to it that you sweep up.

[*Exit to the entry L. U. E. preceded by the* BARON.]

ACTOR. [*Crawls down from the stove.*] I must not inhale dust. It injures me [*self-pityingly*]. My organism is poisoned with alcohol.

[*Sits introspectively on the bunk before the stove.*]

SAHTIN. Orgism. Orga*nism* [*derisively*].

ANNA. [*To* KLESHTSCH.] Andrew Mitritch.

KLESHTSCH. What is the matter now?

ANNA. Kvaschnya left some custard for me. Go eat it.

KLESHTSCH. [*Crosses to her.*] Won't you eat?

ANNA. I won't. Why should I eat? You — work. You must eat.

KLESHTSCH. Are you afraid? Do not despair. Perhaps you'll be better again.

ANNA. Go, eat. My heart is grieved; the end is near.

KLESHTSCH. [*Moves away.*] Oh, no; perhaps — you can get up yet — such things have happened. [*Exit R. into kitchen.*]

ACTOR. [*Loudly, as though suddenly awakened from a dream.*] Yesterday, in the dispensary, the doctor said to me: "Your organism is poisoned with alcohol, through and through."

SAHTIN. [*Laughing.*] Orgism!

ACTOR. [*With emphasis.*] Not orgism, but organism — or-gan-is-m.

SAHTIN. Sigambrer!

ACTOR. [*With a depreciating movement of the hand.*] Ah! gibberish. I tell you I'm speaking in earnest. My organism is poisoned . . . so that I shall be injured if I sweep the room . . . and breathe the dust.

SAHTIN. Microbites . . . ha!

BUBNOFF. What are you muttering about?

SAHTIN. Words . . . then there is still another word: transcendental.

BUBNOFF. What does that mean?

SAHTIN. I don't know, I've forgotten.

BUBNOFF. Why do you say it then?

SAHTIN. Just so . . . I'm tired of all our words, Bubnoff. Every one of them I've heard at least a thousand times.

ACTOR. As it says in Hamlet, "Words, words, words." A magnificent piece, "Hamlet" — I've played the grave digger.

KLESHTSCH. [*Entering R. from the kitchen.*] Will you begin to play the broom?

ACTOR. That's very little to you. [*Strikes his breast with his fist.*] "The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons. Be all my sins remembered!"

[*Within, somewhere in the distance, are heard dull cries and the shrill sound of a policeman's whistle.* KLESHTSCH *sits down to work and the rasping of his file is heard.*]

SAHTIN. I love the incomprehensible rare words. As a young man I was in the telegraph service. I have read many books.

BUBNOFF. So you have been a telegraph operator?

SAHTIN. To be sure. [*Laughs.*] Many beautiful books exist, and a lot of curious words. I was a man of education, understand that?

BUBNOFF. I've already heard so, a hundred times. What does the world care what a man was. I, for example, was a

furrier, had my own place of business. My arm was quite yellow — from the dye, when I colored the furs — quite yellow, my friend, up to the elbow. I thought that my whole life long I could never wash it clean, would descend, with yellow hands, into my grave, and now look at them, they are — simply dirty, see!

SAHTIN. And what more?

BUBNOFF. Nothing more.

SAHTIN. What of it all?

BUBNOFF. I mean only . . . by way of example . . . no matter how gaily a man lays the color on, it all rubs off again . . . all off again! See!

SAHTIN. Hm! . . . My bones ache!

ACTOR. [*Sits on the bunk before the stove, his arms over his knees.*] Education is a rigmarole, the main thing is genius. I once knew an actor . . . he could scarcely read the words of his part, but he played his hero in such a way that the walls of the theatre shook with the ecstasy of the public . . .

SAHTIN. Bubnoff, give me five copecs.

BUBNOFF. I've got only two myself.

ACTOR. I say, genius a leading man must have. Genius — believe in yourself, in your own power. . . .

SAHTIN. Give me five copecs and I will believe that you are a genius, a hero, a crocodile, a precinct captain. Kleshtsch, give me a fiver.

KLESHTSCH. Go to the devil. There are too many ragamuffins about.

SAHTIN. Stop scolding; I know you have nothing.

ANNA. Andrew Mitritch . . . It is suffocating. It is hard. . . .

KLESHTSCH. What can I do about that?

BUBNOFF. Open the door to the street floor.

KLESHTSCH. Well said! You sit on your bench and I on the ground. Let us change places and then open the door . . . I have a cold already.

BUBNOFF. [*Undisturbed.*] It is not for me. . . . Your wife asks for it.

KLESHTSCH. [*Scowling.*] A good many things are being asked for in this world.

SAHTIN. My headpiece hums. Ah, why do people always go for your head?

BUBNOFF. Not only the head, but also other parts of the body are often struck. [*Gets up.*] I must get some thread. The landlord and landlady are late today. But they might be rotting already for all I know.

[*Exit L. U. E.* ANNA *coughs.* SAHTIN, *with his hands under his neck, lies motionless.*]

ACTOR. [*Regards the atmosphere gloomily and goes to* ANNA'S *bed.*] Well, how is it? Bad?

ANNA. It is stifling. . . .

ACTOR. Shall I take you out into the entry? . . . Get up then. [*He helps the sick woman up, throws tattered shawl over her shoulders and supports her, as they totter up the steps to the landing.*] Come, now . . . be brave. I, too, am a sick man — poisoned with alcohol.

[*Enter* KOSTILIOFF, *L. U. E.*]

KOSTILIOFF. [*At the door.*] Out for a promenade? What a fine couple — Jack and Jill.

ACTOR. Stand aside. Don't you see that — the sick are passing by?

KOSTILIOFF. All right, pass by, then. [*Humming the melody of a church hymn, he takes a mistrustful look about the basement, descends to the floor, leans his head to the left as if to overhear something in* PEPEL'S *room.* KLESHTSCH *claps furiously with the keys and files noisily, the proprietor giving him a black look.*] Busy scraping, eh? [*Crosses to R. F.*]

KLESHTSCH. What?

KOSTILIOFF. Busy scraping, I said . . . [*Pause.*] Hm — yes . . . What was I going to say? [*Hastily and in a lower tone.*] Was n't my wife there?

KLESHTSCH. Have n't seen her . . .

KOSTILIOFF. [*Guardedly approaches the door of* PEPEL'S *room.*] How much space you take for your two rubles a month! That bed . . . You yourself sitting everlastingly here — nyah,[1] five rubles' worth, at least. I raise you half a ruble. . . .

KLESHTSCH. Put a halter around my neck . . . and raise me a little more. You are an old man, you'll soon be rotting in your grave . . . and you think of nothing but half rubles.

[1] An expression equivalent to no or yes.

KOSTILIOFF. Why should I halter you? Who would be the better for that? Live, may God bless you, be content. Yet I raise you half a ruble to buy oil for the holy lamps . . . and my offering will burn before the holy image . . . for the remission of my sins, and thine also . . . You never think yourself of your sins, I guess, do you . . . ah, Andreuschka, what a sinful beast you are . . . your wife languishing in agony from your blows . . . nobody likes you, nobody respects you . . . your work is so grating that nobody can endure you. . . .

KLESHTSCH. [*Cries out.*] Do you come . . . to hack me to pieces?

[SAHTIN *roars aloud.*]

KOSTILIOFF. [*Shudders.*] Ah . . . What is the matter with you, my friend!

ACTOR. [*Enters from stairs L. U. E.*] I took the woman into the entry . . . put her in a chair and wrapped her up warm. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. What a good Samaritan you are. It will be rewarded. . . .

ACTOR. When?

KOSTILIOFF. In the next world, brother dear. . . . There they sit and reckon up our every word and deed.

ACTOR. Why not, for the goodness of my heart, give me some recompense here?

KOSTILIOFF. How can I do that?

ACTOR. Knock off half my debt. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. Ha, ha, always having your fun, little buck, always jollying . . . Can goodness of the heart be ever repaid with money? Goodness of the heart stands higher than all the treasures of this world. Nyah . . . and your debt — is only a debt. . . . There it stands. . . . Goodness of the heart you must bestow upon an old man without recompense. . . .

ACTOR. You are a cunning old knave. . . . [*Exit R. into kitchen.*]

[KLESHTSCH *rises and goes upstairs, L. U. E.*]

KOSTILIOFF. [*To* SAHTIN.] Who just sneaked out? The scrape? He is not fond of me, he, he!

SAHTIN. Who is fond of you except the devil?

KOSTILIOFF. [*Laughs quietly.*] Don't scold. I have you all so nicely . . . my dear friends, but I am fond of you all, my poor, unhappy brethren, citizens of nowhere, hapless and helpless . . . [*Suddenly brisk.*] Tell me . . . is Waska at home?

SAHTIN. Look and see for yourself.

KOSTILIOFF. [*Goes to* PEPEL'S *door, L. U., and knocks.*] Waska!

[*Enter* ACTOR *R. standing in kitchen door chewing something.*]

PEPEL. [*Within.*] Who's that?

KOSTILIOFF. Me, Waska. . . .

PEPEL. [*Within.*] What do you want? . . .

KOSTILIOFF. [*Stepping back.*] Open the door.

SAHTIN. [*Pretending to be oblivious.*] She is there. The moment he opens it. . . .

[*The* ACTOR *chuckles to him.*]

KOSTILIOFF. [*Disturbed, softly.*] How, who is in there? What. . . .

SAHTIN. Hm? Are you speaking to me?

KOSTILIOFF. What did you say?

SAHTIN. Nothing at all . . . only . . . to myself . . .

KOSTILIOFF. Take good care of yourself, my friend . . . you are too waggish. [*Knocks loudly on the door.*] Wassili . . .

PEPEL. [*Opening the door.*] What are you bothering me about?

KOSTILIOFF. [*Peers into* PEPEL'S *room.*] *I* . . . you see . . . you see . . .

PEPEL. Have you brought the money?

KOSTILIOFF. I have a little business with you.

PEPEL. Have you brought the money?

KOSTILIOFF. Which money? . . . wait.

PEPEL. Money, the seven rubles for the watch, see!

KOSTILIOFF. Which watch, Waska! Ah, you . . . none of your tricks.

PEPEL. Be careful. I sold you yesterday in the presence of witnesses a watch for ten rubles . . . I got three, and now I'll take the other seven. Out with them. What are you blinking about around here . . . disturbing everybody . . . and forgetting the main thing. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. Ssh! Not so quick, Waska. The watch was, indeed . . .

SAHTIN. Stolen.

KOSTILIOFF. [*Stoutly, sharply.*] I never receive stolen goods. . . . How dare you . . .

PEPEL. [*Takes him by the shoulders.*]

Tell me, why did you wake me up? What do you want?

KOSTILIOFF. I . . . Nothing at all . . . I am going already . . . when you act so.

PEPEL. Go then, and bring me the money.

KOSTILIOFF. [*As he goes.*] Tough customers . . . ah! ah! [*Exit L. U. E.*]

ACTOR. Here is comedy for you!

SAHTIN. Very good, I like it. . . .

PEPEL. What did he want?

SAHTIN. [*Laughing.*] Don't you catch on? He was looking for his wife. . . . Say, why don't you finish him, Waska?

PEPEL. Would it pay to spoil my life for such stuff?

SAHTIN. Spoil your life! Naturally you must do it cleverly . . . Then marry Wassilissa . . . and be our landlord. . . .

PEPEL. That would be nice. You, my guests, would soon guzzle up the whole place, and me in the bargain . . . I am much too open-handed for you. [*Sits on the bunk, U.*] Yes, old devil! Waked me up out of my best sleep . . . I was having a beautiful dream. I dreamed that I was fishing, and suddenly I caught a big trout. A trout, I tell you . . . only in dreams are there such great trout. . . . I pulled and pulled, till his gills almost snapped off . . . and just as I was finishing him with a net . . . and thinking I had him. . . .

SAHTIN. 'T was n't any trout, 't was Wassilissa.

ACTOR. He has had her in the net a long while.

PEPEL. [*Angrily.*] Go to the devil . . . with your Wassilissa.

KLESHTSCH. [*Entering L. U. E.*] It's beastly cold outside. . . .

ACTOR. Why did n't you bring Anna back? She will freeze to death.

KLESHTSCH. Natasha had taken her along to the kitchen. . . .

ACTOR. The old scamp will chase her out. . . .

KLESHTSCH. [*Crosses R. D. and sits down to work.*] Natasha will soon bring her in.

SAHTIN. Wassili, five copecs.

ACTOR. Yes, five copecs, Waska, give us twenty . . .

PEPEL. If I don't hurry. . . . You'll want a whole ruble . . . there!

[*Gives the* ACTOR *a coin.*]

SAHTIN. Giblartarr! There are no better men in the world than the thieves!

KLESHTSCH. They get their money easy . . . they don't work. . . .

SAHTIN. Money comes easy to many, but very few give it up easily . . . Work, if you arrange it so that work gives me joy, then perhaps I will work too . . . perhaps! When work is a pleasure — then life is beautiful . . . When you must work — then life is slavery. [*To* ACTOR.] Come Sardanapálus, we will go. . . .

ACTOR. Come, Nebuchadnézzar, I will get as drunk as forty thousand topers.

[*Exit both L. U. E.*]

PEPEL. [*Gapes.*] How is your wife?

KLESHTSCH. [*Pause.*] She won't last long, I guess.

PEPEL. When I sit and watch you so, I think, what good comes of all your scraping.

KLESHTSCH. What else shall I do?

PEPEL. Do nothing.

KLESHTSCH. How shall I eat?

PEPEL. Other men eat without taking so much trouble.

KLESHTSCH. Other men? You mean this ragged pack of tramps here, idlers, you call them men! I am a workingman . . . I am ashamed to look at them. I have worked from childhood on. Do you think that I shall never crawl out of this cesspool again? It is quite certain, let me work the skin off my hands, but I'll get out . . . wait until after my wife dies . . . six months in this hole . . . it seems like six years.

PEPEL. What are you complaining about? . . . we are no worse than you.

KLESHTSCH. No worse . . . people living on God's earth without honor or conscience?

PEPEL. [*In an impartial tone, cool.*] What good is honor or conscience? You can't put such things on your feet when the snow is on the ground. Honor and conscience to those in power and authority.

BUBNOFF. [*Enters L. U. E.*] Ug-h! I'm frozen stiff.

PEPEL. Tell me, Bubnoff, have you a conscience?

BUBNOFF. What? A conscience?

PEPEL. Yes.

BUBNOFF. What use is it to me? I'm no millionaire. . . .

PEPEL. That's what I say. Honor and conscience are only for the rich — and yet Kleshtsch, here, is pulling us over the coals; we have no conscience he says . . .

BUBNOFF. Does he want to borrow some from us?

PEPEL. He has plenty of his own. . . .

BUBNOFF. Maybe you'll sell us some? No, it don't sell here. If it was broken hat-boxes, I'd buy . . . but only on credit. . . .

PEPEL. [*Instructively, to* KLESHTSCH.] You're certainly a fool, Andreuschka. You ought to hear what Sahtin says about a conscience . . . or the Baron. . . .

KLESHTSCH. I have nothing to talk to them about. . . .

PEPEL. They have more wit than you, even if they are drunks. . . .

BUBNOFF. When a clever fellow drinks, he doubles his wit.

PEPEL. Sahtin says: every man wants his neighbor to have some conscience — but for himself, he can do without it . . . and that's right.

[NATASHA *enters L. U. E., and behind her* LUKA, *with a staff in his hand, a sack on his back, and a small kettle and tea boiler at his girdle.*]

LUKA. Good day to you, honest folks.

PEPEL. [*Pulling his moustache.*] A-h, Natasha.

BUBNOFF. [*To* LUKA.] Honest were we once, as you must know, but since last spring, a year ago. . . .

NATASHA. Here — a new lodger. . . .

LUKA. [*To* BUBNOFF.] It's all the same to me. I know how to respect thieves, too. Any flea, say I, may be just as good as you or me; all are black, and all jump . . . that's the truth. Where shall I quarter myself here, my love?

NATASHA. [*Points to the kitchen door.*] Go in there . . . daddy.

LUKA. Thank you, my girl, as you say . . . A warm corner is an old man's delight. [*Exit R. into kitchen.*]

PEPEL. What an agreeable old chap you have brought along, Natasha?

NATASHA. No matter, he is more interesting than you. [*Then to* KLESHTSCH.] Andrew, your wife is with us in the kitchen . . . come for her after a while.

KLESHTSCH. All right, I'll come.

NATASHA. Be good to her now . . . we won't have her long . . .

KLESHTSCH. I know it . . .

NATASHA. Yes, you know it . . . but that is not enough! Make it quite clear to yourself, think what it means to die . . . it is frightful. . . .

PEPEL. You see I am not afraid . . .

NATASHA. The brave are not. . . .

BUBNOFF. [*Whistles.*] The thread is rotten.

PEPEL. Certainly I am not afraid, I would welcome death right now. Take a knife and strike me in the heart — not a murmur will I utter. I would meet death with joy . . . from clean hands . . . like yours.

NATASHA. [*As she goes.*] Do not say anything which is not so, Pepel.

BUBNOFF. [*Drawling.*] The thread is absolutely rotten.

NATASHA. [*From the door to the entry.*] Don't forget your wife, Andrew.

KLESHTSCH. All right. [*Exit* NATASHA.]

PEPEL. A fine girl.

BUBNOFF. None better.

PEPEL. But what has set her against me so? She alone . . . always refusing me . . . but this life will be her ruin, all the same.

BUBNOFF. It is you who will be the ruin of her.

PEPEL. I be her ruin . . . I pity her . . .

BUBNOFF. As the wolf pities the lamb.

PEPEL. You lie! I do pity her . . . Her lot is very hard. . . . I see that. . . .

KLESHTSCH. Just wait until Wassilissa finds you together. . . .

BUBNOFF. Yes, Wassilissa! Nobody can play any tricks on her, the fiend.

PEPEL. [*Stretches himself out on the bunk, U.*] The devil take you both, prophets.

KLESHTSCH. Wait . . . and see. . . .

LUKA. [*Within, singing.*] "In the darkness of midnight, no path can be found."

KLESHTSCH. Now he is beginning to

howl. . . . [*Crosses to L. U. E.*] He too is beginning. [*Exit.*]

PEPEL. My heart is in the depths . . . why is it? We live and live and everything goes well . . . then all of a sudden . . . melancholy like a blighting frost settles upon us. Life is used up. . . .

BUBNOFF. Sad, melancholy, eh? . . .

PEPEL. Yes . . . by God.

LUKA. [*Singing.*] "No path can be found."

PEPEL. Heh, you bag of bones.

LUKA. [*Enters R.*] Do you mean me?

PEPEL. Yes, you. Cut the singing out.

LUKA. [*Crossing to C.*] Don't you like singing?

PEPEL. When singing is well sung, I enjoy it.

LUKA. Then I do not sing well?

PEPEL. That's about right.

LUKA. Too bad, and I thought that I sang beautifully. So it always goes. You think to yourself, I have done that well, but the public is not pleased. . . .

PEPEL. [*Laughs.*] You are right, there.

BUBNOFF. Ump! roaring again, and just now you said life was so sad, melancholy.

PEPEL. What have you to say about it, old raven? . . .

LUKA. Who is despondent?

PEPEL. I . . .

[*The* BARON *enters L. U. E.*]

LUKA. So, and there — in the kitchen sits a girl reading a book and crying; upon my word! Her tears flowing . . . I asked her, what troubles you, my love — eh? And she said: It is so pitiful . . . Whom do you pity then? I asked. . . . See, here in the book, the people, said she . . . And that is how she passes her time to drive away despondency, it appears. . . .

BARON. She is a fool.

PEPEL. Have you had your tea, Baron? [*An invitation.*]

BARON. Tea, yes . . . anything more?

PEPEL. Shall I stand for a bottle of rum, eh, that's right.

BARON. Of course . . . what more?

PEPEL. Let me ask you to stand on all fours and bark like a dog.

BARON. Blockhead; are you a Crœsus? Or are you drunk?

PEPEL. That's right, bark away. I shall enjoy it. . . . You are a gentleman . . . There was a time once when you did not take us for human beings even . . . and so on . . . and so on.

BARON. Well, and what more?

PEPEL. What more? I'll let you bark now. You'll bark, won't you?

BARON. I have no objection on my own account . . . booby. How can it be such fun for you . . . When I know myself that I am sunk deeper even than you. . . . Had you once dared you ought to have tried to get me on all fours when I was above you.

BUBNOFF. You are right.

LUKA. So I say too, you are right.

BUBNOFF. What has been has been. Nothing is left but trash . . . we are not dukes here . . . the trappings are gone . . . only the bare man remains. . . .

LUKA. All are alike, know that. . . . Were you once a baron, my friend?

BARON. What's that you say? Who are you, sepulchre?

LUKA. [*Laughs.*] An earl I have seen already and a prince . . . too . . . But now for the first time, a baron, and a seedy one . . .

PEPEL. [*Laughs.*] Ha, ha, ha, I blush for you, Baron.

BARON. Don't be an idiot, Wassili. . . .

LUKA. Yes, yes, my friends. When I look around me . . . this life here . . . ah!

BUBNOFF. This life, . . . why, this life here would make any man howl, from break-o'-day on, like a starving owl.

BARON. To be sure, we have all seen better days. I for example . . . On waking up I used to drink my coffee in bed . . . coffee with cream . . . that's right.

LUKA. And you are still a man. No matter what somersaults you turn before us, as a man you were born and as a man you must die. The more I look about myself, the more I contemplate mankind, the more interesting he grows . . . poorer and poorer he sinks and higher and higher his aspirations mount . . . obstinacy.

BARON. Tell me, old man . . . exactly who you are . . . where do you come from?

LUKA. Who? I?

BARON. Are you a pilgrim?

LUKA We are all pilgrims here on this earth. . . . It has been said, even, I am told, that our earth is only a pilgrimage to Heaven's gate. . . .

BARON. It is so, but tell me . . . have you a passport?

LUKA. [*Hesitatingly.*] Who are you? A detective?

PEPEL. [*Briskly.*] Well said, old man! Ha, my lord, that went home!

BUBNOFF. He gets what is coming to him. . . .

BARON. [*Disconcerted.*] Well! well! I am only joking, old man. I've no papers, myself.

BUBNOFF. You lie!

BARON. That is to say . . . I have papers . . . but they're of no use.

LUKA. So it is with all pen scratches . . . they're of no use. . . .

PEPEL. Baron! Come have one, for the sake of thirst. . . .

BARON. I'm with you. Bye-bye, see you again, old chap. . . . You're a sly dog. . . .

LUKA. It may be true, my friend.

PEPEL. [*At the door L. U. E.*] Are you coming?

[*Exit followed quickly by the* BARON.]

LUKA. Has the man really been a baron?

BUBNOFF. Who knows? He has been a nobleman, that is certain. Even now his former air shows through. The manner clings . . .

LUKA. Breeding is like the smallpox: The man recovers, but the pits remain.

BUBNOFF. But otherwise he is a good fellow . . . except that sometimes he is overbearing. . . . As he was about your passport. . . .

ALYOSCHKA. [*Enters L. U. E. drunk, an accordeon under his arm. He whistles.*] Hey, there, neighbors.

BUBNOFF. What are you howling about?

ALYOSCHKA. Excuse me, please . . . pass it over. I am a cozy boy. . . .

BUBNOFF. Broken out again?

ALYOSCHKA. Why not? Police captain Medviskin has just chased me off his beat. "Take your stand out of the street," says he. No, no, I am still a youth of good temperament . . . the boss was jawing at me too . . . bah, what do I care for bosses . . . bah, everything is all a mistake, should a tank be boss . . . I am a man, who . . . never a wish have . . . has . . . I want nothing . . . that settles it . . . now, take me . . . for one ruble and twenty copecs you can have me . . . and I want ab-solt-ly nothing. [NASTIAH *enters R. from kitchen.*] Offer me a million — and I will not take it. And that whiskey barrel, to be boss over me, a good man, no better than — it don't go. I'll not stand for it.

[NASTIAH *remains standing at the door, shaking her head at the spectacle of* ALYOSCHKA.]

LUKA. [*Good-naturedly.*] Ah, boy . . . you can't unravel it.

BUBNOFF. There you have human folly.

ALYOSCHKA. [*Lies down on the floor.*] Now, eat me up. Costs nothing. I am a desperado. You just tell me, am I worse than the others? How am I worse? Just think, Medviskin said: "Don't show yourself on the street, or else I'll give you one in the snout." But I'll go . . . I'll lie down crosswise in the street, let them choke me. I want ab-solt-ly nothing. . . . [*Rises.*]

NASTIAH. Wretch . . . so young and putting on such airs. . . .

ALYOSCHKA. [*Sees her and kneels.*] My lady, my fräulein, mamsell! Parlez français . . . price current . . . I am jagging.

NASTIAH. [*Whispers loudly.*] Wassilissa. [*Sees her coming.*]

WASSILISSA. [*Opens door at head of stairs R. U. E. to* ALYOSCHKA.] Here again, . . . already?

ALYOSCHKA. Good morning. Please, come down.

WASSILISSA. Did n't I tell you, you pup, not to show yourself here again? [*Descends.*]

ALYOSCHKA. Wassilissa Karpovna — if you please, I'll play you a funeral march.

WASSILISSA. [*Pushes him on the shoulder.*] Get out!

ALYOSCHKA. [*Shuffles to the door, L. U. E.*] No, I won't wait. First listen to the funeral march. . . . I've just learned it . . .

new music . . . wait a minute . . . you must n't act so.

WASSILISSA. I will show you how I must act . . . I'll put the whole street on your track, you damned heathen . . . so, telling folks on me. . .

ALYOSCHKA. [*Runs out L. U. E.*] No, I am already gone. [*Exit.*]

WASSILISSA. [*To* BUBNOFF.] See to it that he does not set foot in here again, you hear?

BUBNOFF. I'm not your watchman.

WASSILISSA. No, but you are a dead beat. How much do you owe me?

BUBNOFF. [*Calmly.*] I have n't counted it up. . . .

WASSILISSA. Look out or I'll count it up.

ALYOSCHKA. [*Opens the door and cries.*] Wassilissa Karpovna, I am not afraid of you . . . I am not afraid.

[*He hides behind a cloth which hangs over the balustrade and* LUKA *laughs.*]

WASSILISSA. And who are you?

LUKA. A pilgrim, a mere wanderer. I go from place to place. . . .

WASSILISSA. Will you stay over night . . . or for good?

LUKA. I will see.

[ALYOSCHKA *slips into the kitchen.*]

WASSILISSA. Your passport.

LUKA. You may have it.

WASSILISSA. Give it to me, then.

LUKA. I'll get it presently . . . I'll drag it to your room. . . .

WASSILISSA. A pilgrim — You look it; say a vagabond . . . that sounds more like the truth. . . .

LUKA. [*Sighs.*] You are not very hospitable, mother.

[WASSILISSA *goes to* PEPEL'S *door.*]

ALYOSCHKA. [*Whispers, from the kitchen.*] Has she gone? . . . hm.

WASSILISSA. [*Turns on him.*] Are you still there?

[ALYOSCHKA *disappears into the kitchen, whistling.* NASTIAH *and* LUKA *laugh.*]

BUBNOFF. [*To* WASSILISSA.] He is not there. . . .

WASSILISSA. Who?

BUBNOFF. Waska.

[ALYOSCHKA *slips around to the stairs, exit L. U. E.*]

WASSILISSA. Have I asked you for him?

BUBNOFF. I can see that you are looking into every corner.

WASSILISSA. I am looking after things, do you understand. Why have you not swept up? How often have I told you that you must keep the place clean?

BUBNOFF. It's the actor's turn today. . . .

WASSILISSA. It makes no difference to me whose turn it is. When the Health Department people come and fine me, I'll have you thrown out . . .

BUBNOFF. [*Calmly.*] And what will you live on, in that case?

WASSILISSA. See that not a speck of dust is left. [*Goes to the kitchen door to* NASTIAH.] And what are you standing around like a post for? What are you gawking about? Sweep up! Have you not seen . . . Natalya? Has she been here?

NASTIAH. I don't know . . . I have n't seen her.

WASSILISSA. Bubnoff, was my sister here?

BUBNOFF. Certainly. She brought the old man.

WASSILISSA. And he, was he in his room?

BUBNOFF. Wassili . . . to be sure . . . She was talking with Kleshtsch . . . Natalya. . . .

WASSILISSA. I did not ask you who she was talking with . . . Dirt everywhere, a foot thick. Ah, you pigs. See that you clean up . . . do you hear me?

[*Exit quickly R. U. E.*]

BUBNOFF. What a nasty temper that woman has.

LUKA. A brutal wife.

NASTIAH. This life would brutalize anybody. And tied to such a husband — how can she bear that?

BUBNOFF. She does not feel tied, so very tight. . . .

LUKA. Is she always . . . so biting?

BUBNOFF. Always . . . she was looking for her lover, you see, and that dismayed her.

LUKA. Um, so that's the trouble . . . ah, yes, how many different people there are

here on this earth go bossing around . . . and all trying to lord it over the rest, but in spite of it all bringing no cleanness about.

BUBNOFF. They try, indeed, to bring order about, but the wit is lacking . . . which means, that we must finally clean up . . . Nastiah . . . won't you do it? . . .

NASTIAH. Certainly! Am I your chambermaid? [*She remains silent for a time.*] I'll get drunk today . . . soaked full.

[*Motion of her hand to her chin.*]

BUBNOFF. Good business.

LUKA. What are you going to get drunk for, my daughter? You were crying a moment ago, and now you promise to get drunk. . . .

NASTIAH. [*Defiantly.*] And when I have gotten drunk, I will cry again . . . that's all. . . .

BUBNOFF. But it's not much.

LUKA. For what reason, tell me? Everything has a cause, even the smallest pimple in the face.

[NASTIAH *is silent, shaking her head.*]

LUKA. Aye, aye, such is man . . . that's the way with people, what will become of them? I will sweep up myself. Where do you keep the broom?

BUBNOFF. In the entry, behind the door. [*Exit* LUKA *L. U. E.*] Tell me, Nastenka.

NASTIAH. [*Sits R. U. before stove.*] Um.

BUBNOFF. What has Wassilissa got against Alyoschka, so much?

NASTIAH. He has told everybody that Waska don't like her any more . . . is tired of her, is going to give her up, for Natasha interests him . . . I am going to pull out and find another place. . . .

BUBNOFF. Why so?

NASTIAH. I am tired of it. I am in the way . . . superfluous.

BUBNOFF. [*Thoughtfully.*] Where would n't you be superfluous? Everybody here on earth is superfluous. . . .

[NASTIAH *shakes her head, rises and goes quietly up-stairs R. U. E.*]

[MEDVIEDEFF *enters L. U. E. followed by* LUKA *with the broom.*]

MEDVIEDEFF. [*To* LUKA.] I don't remember having seen you.

LUKA. And the rest, you've seen them Do you know everybody?

MEDVIEDEFF. Along my beat I must know everybody — and I don't know you. . . .

LUKA. You would, if your beat included the whole world, but there is a small corner which has been left off. [*Exit R.*]

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Crossing to* BUBNOFF *L.*] That's right. My beat is not large . . . but the work is worse than in many bigger ones. Just as I came off duty I had to take that young cobbler Alyoschka to the station house. The rascal was sprawled out on his back in the middle of the street, if you can believe it, playing his accordeon and bellowing: "I want for nothing, I wish for nothing," and wagons coming both ways and traffic everywhere. . . . He could easily have been run over, or something else happen . . . rattlebrain. . . . Of course I locked him up . . . he is a little too fresh.

BUBNOFF. Come around tonight . . . We'll have a game of checkers.

MEDVIEDEFF. I'll come . . . hm, yes . . . but how is it about Waska?

BUBNOFF. All right. . . . Same old thing. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. Still alive?

BUBNOFF. Why not, his life is worth living.

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Doubtfully.*] So . . . has he? [LUKA *enters R. from kitchen, and exit L. U. E., a bucket to his hand.*] Hm — yes . . . there is a rumor about . . . Waska . . . have n't you heard?

BUBNOFF. I've heard lots of things.

MEDVIEDEFF. Something about Wassilissa, he . . . have you not noticed?

BUBNOFF. What?

MEDVIEDEFF. Why . . . in general . . . you know all about it but don't like to say so . . . it is well known . . . [*strongly*] don't lie, my friend!

BUBNOFF. Why should I lie?

MEDVIEDEFF. I thought . . . ah, the curs . . . they say, in short that Waska with Wassilissa . . . so to speak . . . nyah, what do I care? I am not her father, but only . . . her uncle. . . . It can't hurt me if they can't laugh at me. [KVASCHNYA *enters L. U. E.*] A bad lot . . . ah, you have come. . . .

KVASCHNYA. My dear captain. Just think, Bubnoff, he proposed to me again at the market. . . .

BUBNOFF. What of it . . . Why do you put him off? He has money, and is a pretty hearty lover, even yet. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. I, . . . to be sure.

KVASCHNYA. Ah, you old gray stud-horse. No, don't come near. That foolishness happens to me only once in a lifetime, and I've been through it already. Marriage, for a woman, is like jumping into the river in winter; once she's done it, she remembers it all her life.

MEDVIEDEFF. Wait . . . the husbands are not all the same. . . .

KVASCHNYA. But I always remain the same. When my dear husband — when the devil took him — when he became a carcass, damn his ghost, I did not leave the house the whole day for joy; I sat there all alone and could scarcely believe my happiness.

MEDVIEDEFF. Why did you allow your husband to beat you? If you had gone to the police. . . .

KVASCHNYA. Police! I complained to God for eight years . . . and even God could n't do anything.

MEDVIEDEFF. But it is illegal now to beat wives. . . . Law and order are now enforced. . . . No man dare beat anybody now, except for the sake of law and order. . . . Wife beating happens only in lawless places. . . .

LUKA. [*Leads* ANNA *in, L. U. E.*] Now, look out . . . now we've crawled down . . . ah, you poor child . . . How could you go around alone so, in your condition? Where is your bed?

ANNA. [*Draws toward L. D.*] Thank you, daddy.

KVASCHNYA. There you have a married woman . . . look at her.

LUKA. Such a poor, weak thing . . . creeping about quite alone there up in the entry, clinging to the walls — moaning without cease . . . why did you allow her to go out alone?

KVASCHNYA. We did not notice it — pardon me, grandfather. Her lady in waiting has probably gone for a stroll. . . .

LUKA. So you laugh. . . . How can you abandon another so? Whatever he may have become — he still remains a human being.

MEDVIEDEFF. This ought to be investigated. If she dies suddenly? We shall be mixed up in it. Give her every attention.

LUKA. Quite right, Mr. Captain. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. Hm . . . yes . . . you may say so . . . though I'm not a captain yet. . . .

LUKA. Is it possible? But we should conclude from your appearance that you are a true hero.

[*From above a noise, the stamping of feet and smothered cries.*]

MEDVIEDEFF. Not quite yet — looks like a row.

BUBNOFF. It sounds like one. . . .

KVASCHNYA. I'll go see.

MEDVIEDEFF. And I've got to go too . . . ah, the service! Why should people be pulled apart when they brawl? They finally quit fighting of their own accord . . . when they are tired of thumping each other . . . the best thing to do is to let them get their bellies full of fighting . . . then they don't row so often . . . they are n't in shape to. . . .

BUBNOFF. [*Gets off his bench.*] You must lay your plan before the authorities. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. [*Throws open the door L. U. E. and cries.*] Abram . . . come . . . quick . . . Wassilissa is killing Natasha . . . come . . . come!

[KVASCHNYA, MEDVIEDEFF, BUBNOFF *run to the entry, L. U. E., and* LUKA *looks after them, shaking his head.*]

ANNA. Ah, God . . . the poor Natashenka!

LUKA. Who is brawling there?

ANNA. Our landlady . . . the two sisters . . .

LUKA. [*Approaches* ANNA.] Over heirlooms.

ANNA. Both are well fed . . . both are healthy. . . .

LUKA. And you . . . what is your name?

ANNA. My name is Anna. . . . When I look at you . . . you are so much like my father, just like my own dear father . . . you, too, are so kind and tender. . . .

LUKA. Because they have knocked me about the world so much, that is why I am tender. [*Chuckles to himself.*]

ACT II

The same scene. Evening. SAHTIN, *the* BARON, KRIVOI ZOBA *and the* TARTAR *are sitting on the bunk before the stove, playing cards.* KLESHTSCH *and the* ACTOR *are watching the game.* BUBNOFF *on his bench is playing Parti-Dame with* MEDVIEDEFF. LUKA *is sitting on the tabouret at* ANNA'S *bed. The room is lit by two lamps, one hanging on the wall over the card players on the right and the other above* BUBNOFF'S *bench.*

TARTAR. I'll play one more game . . . and then I quit. . . .

BUBNOFF. Krivoi Zoba! A song. [*He sings.*] "Though still the sun goes up and down."

KRIVOI ZOBA. [*Falling in.*] "No gleam can pierce to me in here. . . ."

TARTAR. [*To* SAHTIN.] Shuffle the cards, but no crooked business. We already know what a swindler you are.

BUBNOFF *and* KRIVOI ZOBA. [*Sing together.*] "By day and night my guards stand watch — a — ach,
My prison window always near. . . ."

ANNA. Illness and blows. . . . I have endured . . . they have been my lot . . . my whole life long.

LUKA. Ah, you poor child! Do not grieve.

MEDVIEDEFF. What nerve! Be careful!

BUBNOFF. Ah, ha! So . . . and so, and so . . . [*Throws down card after card.*]

TARTAR. [*Threatens* SAHTIN *with his fist.*] What are you hiding the cards for! I saw you . . . you.

KRIVOI ZOBA. Let him go, Hassan. They're bound to cheat us, one way or another. . . . Sing some more, Bubnoff.

ANNA. I cannot remember to have ever had enough to eat . . . with trembling and fear . . . have I eaten every piece of bread. . . . I have trembled and constantly feared . . . lest I eat more than my share. . . . My whole life long have I gone in rags . . . my whole ill-fated life. . . . Why should this have been?

LUKA. Ah, you poor child! You are tired? It will soon be right!

ACTOR. [*To* KRIVOI ZOBA.] Play the jack . . . the jack, damn it.

BARON. And we have the king!

KLESHTSCH. These cards will always win.

SAHTIN. So . . . they will.

MEDVIEDEFF. A queen!

BUBNOFF. Another . . . there!

ANNA. I am dying. . . .

KLESHTSCH. [*To the* TARTAR.] There — look out! Throw the cards down, prince, stop playing.

ACTOR. Don't you think he knows what to do?

BARON. Be careful, Andrejuschka, that I don't throw you out of the house.

TARTAR. Again, I say. The pitcher goes to the well, then it breaks . . . the same with me. . . .

[KLESHTSCH *shakes his head and goes behind* BUBNOFF.]

ANNA. I am always thinking to myself: My Saviour . . . shall I there too . . . in that world . . . endure such tortures?

LUKA. No! Never! . . . You will suffer nothing. Lie perfectly still . . . and have no fear. You shall find peace there! Be patient yet a little while. . . . We must all suffer, my love. . . . Every one endures life in his own way.

[*He rises and goes hastily into the kitchen R.*]

BUBNOFF. "Spy on, with the might of your eyes, forever."

KRIVOI ZOBA. "On freedom still my thoughts shall dwell. . . ."

TOGETHER. "I cannot spring these chains and locks — a — ach. . . .
Nor fly the walls of this cold cell. . . ."

TARTAR. Stop! He has pushed a card up his sleeve.

BARON. [*Confused.*] No, where else then?

ACTOR. [*Convincingly.*] You have made a mistake, prince! It's not to be thought of. . . .

TARTAR. I saw it! Cheats! I play no more!

SAHTIN. [*Throwing the cards together.*] Then go your way, Hassan. . . . You know

that we are cheats — so why did you play with us?

BARON. He's lost forty copecs, you'd think from the row that he'd lost three hundred. And this is a prince!

TARTAR. [*Violently.*] Everybody must play fair!

SAHTIN. But tell me why?

TARTAR. What does "why" mean?

SAHTIN. Just so . . . why?

TARTAR. Um, you don't know?

SAHTIN. I don't know, do you?

[*The* TARTAR *spits angrily, all laugh at him.*]

KRIVOI ZOBA. [*Cheerfully.*] You are a comical owl, Hassan. Think it over. If they lived honestly they would starve in three days. . . .

TARTAR. What's that to me? People must live honestly.

KRIVOI ZOBA. Same old story, I'd rather have a drink of tea . . . cut loose, Bubnoff.

BUBNOFF. "Alas, these heavy chains of iron, this armed patrol on ceaseless guard. . . ."

KRIVOI ZOBA. Come, Hassan. [*Exit singing.*] "No, nevermore shall I break through."

[*The* TARTAR *threatens the* BARON *with his fist, and then follows his comrade. Exit R.*]

SAHTIN. [*To the* BARON, *laughing.*] Nyah, your worship, you've launched us triumphantly into the mire. You, an educated man, and can't handle cards. . . .

BARON. [*Throwing up his hands.*] The devil knows how the cards should be handled.

ACTOR. No genius, no self-confidence . . . without that you'll never be any good. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. I have a queen, and you have two, hm, yes.

BUBNOFF. One is enough, if well played . . . your play.

KLESHTSCH. The game is lost, Abram Ivanitsch.

MEDVIEDEFF. That is none of your business — understand? Hold your tongue. . . .

SAHTIN. Fifty-three copecs won. . . .

ACTOR. The three copecs are for me . . . though what do I want with three copecs?

LUKA. [*Entering from kitchen R.*] You soaked the Tartar dry. Are you going for some?

BARON. Come with us!

SAHTIN. I'd just like to see you after you've put a couple of dozen away. . . .

LUKA. Surely I would n't look better than I do sober. . . .

ACTOR. Come, old fellow . . . I will declaim for you a pair of pretty couplets. . . .

LUKA. Couplets? What are they?

ACTOR. Verses, don't you understand. . . .

LUKA. Verses, for me . . . poems? What do I want them for?

ACTOR. Ah, they are so comical . . . yet sometimes so sad. . . .

SAHTIN. Are you coming, couplet singer? [*Exit L. U. E. with the* BARON.]

ACTOR. I will catch up with you. [*To* LUKA.] There is, old man, for example, a poem beginning . . . I have completely forgotten it . . . [*Rubs his forehead.*]

BUBNOFF. Your queen is lost . . . go.

MEDVIEDEFF. I played wrong, the devil take it.

ACTOR. In the past, while my organism was not as yet poisoned with alcohol, I had a splendid memory . . . yes, patriarch! Now . . . it is all up with me . . . time and time again, with the greatest success I have recited this poem . . . to thundering applause. . . . Do you know what applause means, brother? It is the wine of wines . . . when I came out, in this posture [*assumes an attitude*] and then began . . [*he is silent*] . . . not a word . . . have I retained. And the poem was my heart's delight. . . . Is that not frightful, patriarch? [*Clutches the air.*]

LUKA. Alas, too bad . . . when the best beloved has been forgotten. In that which man loves, he finds his soul. . . .

ACTOR. I have drowned my soul, patriarch. . . . I am a lost man. . . . And why am I lost? Because I believe in myself no more. . . . I am through. . . .

LUKA. Why so, then. Be cured! The drunkard, I have heard, can now be cured. Without expense, my brother. . . . A dispensary has been erected . . . there you may be cured without charge. They realize now, you see, that the drunkard is also a

man, and they are glad when one comes to allow himself to be cured. Hurry, then, go there. . . .

ACTOR. [*Thoughtfully.*] Where to? Where is it?

LUKA. In a certain city . . . what is it called? A strange name. . . . No, I can't tell you right now . . . but listen to me: You must begin to get ready! Be abstemious! Hold yourself together, and suffer, endure thus. . . . and then you'll be cured. Begin a new life . . . is that not splendid, brother: a new life . . . now, decide . . . one, two, three!

ACTOR. [*Smiling.*] A new life . . . from the start . . . that is beautiful. . . . Can it be true? A new life? — [*Laughs.*] Nyah . . . yes! I can! I can!

LUKA. Why not? Man can achieve everything . . . if he only will. . . .

ACTOR. [*Suddenly, as if awakened from a dream.*] You're a queer customer! So long! See you again. [*He whistles.*] Meantime, old man. [*Exit L. U. E.*]

ANNA. Daddy.

LUKA. What is it, little mother?

ANNA. Talk a little bit, to me. . . .

LUKA. [*Going to her.*] Gladly . . . Let us have a long chat.

[KLESHTSCH *looks around, silently goes to the bed of his wife, looks at her, gesticulates, as if about to speak.*]

LUKA. Well, brother?

KLESHTSCH. [*Whispers as if in fear.*] Nothing.

[*Goes slowly to door, L. U. E. Remains a few moments, then goes out.*]

LUKA. [*Following him with his eyes.*] Your husband seems to be oppressed.

ANNA. I cannot think of him any more.

LUKA. Has he beaten you?

ANNA. How often . . . He has brought me . . . to this.

BUBNOFF. My wife . . . had once an admirer. He played with kings and queens quite splendidly, the rascal. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. Hm.

ANNA. Grandfather . . . Talk to me, my dear . . . I am lonely. . . .

LUKA. That is nothing. That may be felt before death, my dove. It means nothing, dear. Have faith. You will die, you see, and then enter into rest. Have fear of nothing more, of nothing more. It will be still, and peaceful . . . and you will lie resting there. Death subdues everything . . . he is so tender with us . . . Only in death shall rest be found, they say . . . and such is the truth, my love! Where shall rest be found here?

[PEPEL *enters L. U. E. a little drunk, dishevelled and sullen. He sits on the bunk by the kitchen door, silent and motionless.*]

ANNA. And shall there be such torture there?

LUKA. Nothing is there! Believe me, nothing! Rest alone — nothing else. They will lead you before the Master and will say: Look, oh, Master — thy servant Anna is come. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Vigorously.*] How can you know what shall be said there: have you ever heard? . . .

[PEPEL, *at the sound of* MEDVIEDEFF'S *voice, raises his head and listens.*]

LUKA. My information is reliable, Mr. Commissioner. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Softly.*] Hm, — yes. Nyah, it is your affair . . . that means . . . but I am not a commissioner. . . .

BUBNOFF. Two birds with one stone. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. Ah, you, the devil take you. . . .

LUKA. And the Master will look upon you in loving kindness and will say: "I know this Anna!" "Now," he will say, "lead her forth into Paradise. May she there find peace. . . . I know her life was wearisome . . . she is very tired . . . let her have rest, our Anna."

ANNA. Grandfather . . . you, my dear . . . if only it is so . . . if I there . . . find peace . . . and feel nothing more. . . .

LUKA. You will suffer nothing . . . nothing! Only have faith! Die joyfully, without anxiety . . . Death to us, I say unto you, is like a mother soothing her children. . . .

ANNA. But . . . perhaps . . . I will get well again?

LUKA. [*Laughing.*] For what? To fresh tortures?

ANNA. But I might still . . . live a little while . . . a very little while . . . if there is no torture beyond . . . I can afford to suffer at the end here a little more. . . .

LUKA. There shall be no more pain . . . none at all.

PEPEL. [*Rising.*] True — it may be, and may not be!

ANNA. Ah, God. . . .

LUKA. Ah, my dear boy. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. Who is howling there?

PEPEL. [*Going to him.*] Me, what's the matter?

MEDVIEDEFF. People must keep quiet in here. . . . You have no cause for howling.

PEPEL. Ah . . . blockhead! And you her uncle . . . ha, ha!

LUKA. [*Whispers to* PEPEL.] Listen, boy — not so loud. A woman is dying here. . . . Her lips are covered with earth already . . . don't disturb her. . . .

PEPEL. As you say so, grandfather, I will listen to you. You are a splendid chap, pilgrim . . . you tell them famously . . . you're full of nice stories. Keep it up, brother, keep it up . . . there is so little pleasure in the world.

BUBNOFF. Is she dying for keeps?

LUKA. I guess she is not fooling.

BUBNOFF. Then we will finally be rid of that coughing . . . a great nuisance, her everlasting coughing . . . I take two. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. Ah, . . . the devil take you.

PEPEL. Abram. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. I am not Abram . . . for you. . . .

PEPEL. Abrashka, tell me — is Natasha still sick?

MEDVIEDEFF. Does that concern you?

PEPEL. No, but say: did Wassilissa really beat her up so badly?

MEDVIEDEFF. And that's none of your business either . . . that's a family affair . . . who are you, anyhow, eh?

PEPEL. I may be who I am — but when it suits me, I will take your Natasha away. You will not see her again.

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Interrupting his playing.*] What do you say? Whom are you talking about? My niece shall . . . ach, you thief!

PEPEL. A thief — that you have not yet caught. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. Wait! I'll soon catch you . . . in a very little while I will have you. . . .

PEPEL. Whenever it suits you . . . and then your whole nest here will be torn up. Do you think I'll hold my tongue when it comes to the coroner? There you're badly mistaken. Who incited you to theft, they will ask — who put the opportunity before you? Mischka Kostilioff and his wife. And who received the stolen goods? Mischka Kostilioff and his wife.

MEDVIEDEFF. You lie! Nobody will believe it.

PEPEL. They will quickly believe — because it is the truth. And I'll get you into the muddle too, and the rest of you, you gang of thieves — we shall soon see.

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Uneasily.*] Shut up! Shut up! What have I done to you . . . you mad dog. . . .

PEPEL. What good have you done me?

LUKA. Quite right. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. [*To* LUKA.] What are you croaking about? What business is this of yours? This is a family affair. . . .

BUBNOFF. [*To* LUKA.] Let them have it out. . . . We two won't be haltered anyhow. . . .

LUKA. [*Softly.*] I have done no harm. I only think that if a man does not do another good — then he has done wrong.

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Who does not understand* LUKA.] Look, you. We are all acquainted here. . . . And you — who are you?

[*Exit quickly L. U. E. angrily fuming.*]

LUKA. He has gone mad, Sir Cavalier . . . oho! Very peculiar, brothers, what we have here, somewhat complicated.

PEPEL. He has gone to Wassilissa, now, with it.

BUBNOFF. Don't make a fool of yourself, Wassili. Don't try to be the bravest. Bravery, my boy, is good, when you go into the woods for mushrooms. . . . It is out of place here . . . they have you by the throat . . . in a jiffy.

PEPEL. We shall see. . . . We Yaroslavs are much too sly . . . we cannot be caught with the bare hands . . . will you have a fight . . . good, then we begin it. . . .

LUKA. It would indeed, be better, boy, to go away. . . .

PEPEL. Where then? Tell me. . . .

LUKA. Go . . . to Siberia.

PEPEL. Ha! Ha! Never; I'd rather wait until they send me, at the expense of the government. . . .

LUKA. No, really, listen to me! Go there; you can make your way in Siberia . . . they need such young fellows. . . .

PEPEL. My way is already pointed out! My father spent his life in prison, and that fate is my legacy . . . when I was still a small boy they called me a thief and the son of a thief.

LUKA. A beautiful country, Siberia. A golden land. A man with strength and a clear head develops there . . . like a cucumber in a hot bed.

PEPEL. Tell me, pilgrim, why do you fabricate so ceaselessly?

LUKA. How?

PEPEL. Are you deaf? Why do you lie, I ask. . . .

LUKA. When have I lied?

PEPEL. Right straight along. . . . It is beautiful there, by your way of thinking, and beautiful here . . . which is not true. Why, then, do you lie?

LUKA. Believe me! Or go there and convince yourself. . . . You will send me thanks . . . why loiter here? And, from whence comes your eagerness for truth? Think it over: the truth is, they may make an end of you here.

PEPEL. It is all the same . . . even a halter.

LUKA. You are a strange fellow. Why will you put your head into it?

BUBNOFF. What are you two jawing about? I don't catch on. . . . What kind of truth do you want, Waska? What good would it be to you? You know the truth about yourself . . . and all the world knows it. . . .

PEPEL. Hold your snout. Don't croak. He shall tell me first . . . hear, pilgrim . . . is there a God?

[LUKA *laughs and remains silent.*]

BUBNOFF. Mankind is like chips which the storm sweeps away . . . the finished house remains, but the chips are gone.

LUKA. [*Softly.*] If you believe in him, there is a God; believe not and none exists. . . . What you believe in . . . exists . . .

[PEPEL *looks silently surprised at the old man.*]

BUBNOFF. I'll have a drink of tea now . . . come with me to the ale house.

LUKA. [*To* PEPEL.] What are you staring at?

PEPEL. It means then . . . just so . . . wait.

BUBNOFF. Nyah, then I'll go alone.

[*Exit L. U. E., bumping into* WASSILISSA.]

PEPEL. Then . . . do as you . . . then you . . .

WASSILISSA. [*To* BUBNOFF.] Is Nastassja at home?

BUBNOFF. No . . . [*Exit L. U. E.*]

PEPEL. Ah . . . there she is.

WASSILISSA. [*Goes to* ANNA'S *bed.*] Is she still alive?

LUKA. Do not disturb her.

WASSILISSA. And you, what are you loafing around for?

LUKA. I can go out, if I must. . . .

WASSILISSA. [*Approaching* PEPEL'S *door.*] Wassili! I have business with you . . . [LUKA *goes to the door, L. U. E., opens it, closes it noisily, then carefully climbs up the stove and conceals himself.* WASSILISSA *has entered* PEPEL'S *room. Within.*] Waska, come here.

PEPEL. I will not come . . . I will not. . . .

WASSILISSA. [*Re-enters.*] What's the matter? Why are you so mad?

PEPEL. It is tiresome. . . . I am sick of the whole mess here. . . .

WASSILISSA. And me, are you sick . . . of me, too?

PEPEL. You too. . . . [WASSILISSA *pulls the shawl which is over her shoulders closely together and presses her arm against her breast. She goes to* ANNA'S *bed, looks cautiously behind the curtain, and returns to* PEPEL.] Nyah, so . . . speak. . . .

WASSILISSA. What shall I say? No one can be forced to love . . . and I should be unlike myself to beg for love . . . for your frankness many thanks. . . .

PEPEL. My frankness?

WASSILISSA. Yes, you say you are sick of me . . . or is it not true? [PEPEL *looks at her in silence. She approaches him.*] Why do you stare? Do you not know me?

PEPEL. [*With a deep breath.*] You are beautiful, Waska. [WASSILISSA *puts her arm around his neck: he shakes it off with a movement of the shoulder.*] But still my heart has never belonged to you. . . . I have gone on living with you . . . but I have never truly liked you. . . .

WASSILISSA. [*Softly.*] So . . . o . . . now . . . um. . . .

PEPEL. Now we have nothing more to talk about. . . . Nothing more . . . go away . . . leave me alone.

WASSILISSA. Have you found pleasure in another?

PEPEL. That is nothing to you. . . . If it were so — I would not take you along for a matchmaker. . . .

WASSILISSA. [*Meaningly.*] Who knows . . . perhaps I can bring it about.

PEPEL. [*Suspiciously.*] Who with?

WASSILISSA. You know who I mean . . . don't deny it. . . . I talk straight out from the shoulder . . . [*Softly.*] I will only say . . . you have deeply wronged me . . . without provocation you have struck me a blow, as with a club . . . you always said you loved me, and . . . all of a sudden. . . .

PEPEL. All of a sudden . . . not at all. . . . I have thought so, long . . . you have no soul. . . . In a woman there should be a soul. We men are animals . . . we know nothing else . . . and men must first be taught goodness . . . and you, what good have you taught me? . . .

WASSILISSA. What has been has been. . . . I know that we cannot control the impulses of our hearts . . . if you love me no more — good . . . it is all the same to me.

PEPEL. All right, then. It is settled. We separate in friendship, without scandal . . . pleasantly!

WASSILISSA. Stop, not so quick. During the whole time that we have lived together . . . I have always hoped you would help me out of this cesspool here . . . that you would free me from my husband, from my uncle . . . from this whole life . . . and perhaps I have not loved you, Waska, at all . . . perhaps in you I love only . . . my one hope, my one dream . . . do you understand? I had hoped you would pull me out. . . .

PEPEL. You are no nail and I am no tongs . . . I had thought you would finish him; with your slyness . . . for you are sly and quick-witted . . . [*Sits at R. table.*]

WASSILISSA. [*Leans towards him.*] Waska, we will help each other. . . .

PEPEL. How then?

WASSILISSA. [*In a low tone, with expression.*] My sister . . . you have taken a fancy to her, I know it. . . .

PEPEL. And you knock her about so brutally on that account. I'll say this to you, Waska: don't touch her again.

WASSILISSA. Wait. Not so hotly. It can all be done quietly, in friendliness. . . . Marry her whenever you feel like it. I'll find the money, three hundred rubles. If I can get more I'll give you more. . . .

PEPEL. [*Rocks on his seat back and forth.*] Hold on . . . How do you mean that? What for?

WASSILISSA. Free me from my husband. Take that halter from my neck. . . .

PEPEL. [*Whistles.*] Oho, I se-e! You have thought it out well . . . the husband in his grave, the admirer in Siberia, and you yourself. . . .

WASSILISSA. But Waska, why Siberia? Not you yourself . . . your comrades. And even if you did do it yourself — who would know? Think . . . Natasha thine. . . . You shall have money . . . to go away . . . anywhere . . . you free me forever . . . and for my sister too; it will be a good thing for her to be away from me. I can't look at her without getting furious. . . . I hate her on your account . . . I cannot control myself . . . I give her such blows that I myself cry for pity . . . but — I strike her just the same. And I will go on with it.

PEPEL. Beast! Don't sing praises of your own cruelty.

WASSILISSA. I am not praising myself. I only speak the truth. Remember, Waska, you have already been imprisoned twice by my husband . . . when you could not

satisfy his greed. . . . He sticks to me like vermin . . . for four years he has fed on me. Such a man for a husband! And Natasha dreads him too. He oppresses her and calls her a beggar. He is a poison, a rank poison for us all. . . .

PEPEL. How cleverly you contrive it all. . . .

WASSILISSA. What I have said is not contrived . . . It is quite clear to you. . . . Only a fool could not comprehend. . . .

[KOSTILIOFF *enters warily, L. U. E., and sneaks forward.*]

PEPEL. [*To* WASSILISSA.] No . . . go away!

WASSILISSA. Think it over. [*Sees her husband.*] What's this! Dogging me again?

[PEPEL *springs up and looks wildly at* KOSTILIOFF.]

KOSTILIOFF. Indeed . . . it is I . . . it is I . . . and you are quite alone here? Ah . . . ah . . . Been chatting for a spell? [*Suddenly stamps his feet and screeches aloud, to* WASSILISSA.] Waska, you baggage . . . you beggar, you deceptive carrion. [*Then frightened by his own cry which is answered only by an echoless silence.*] Have mercy on me, Lord . . . You have again led me to sin, Wassilissa . . . I search for you everywhere . . . [*Squeakingly.*] It is time to go to bed. Have you forgot to fill the holy lamp? . . . ah, you beggar, you swine!

[*Waves his hands tremblingly in her face.* WASSILISSA *goes slowly to the door, L. U. E., and looks back at* PEPEL.]

PEPEL. [*To* KOSTILIOFF.] You! Go your own way. Get out. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. [*Cries.*] I am the master here: Get out yourself, understand? Thief!

PEPEL. [*Sternly.*] Go your own way, Mischka. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. Be careful! Or else I'll . . .

[PEPEL *seizes him by the collar and shakes him. A noise of turning and yawning is heard on the stove.* PEPEL *loosens* KOSTILIOFF, *who, crying loudly, goes out R. U. E. up the stairs.*]

PEPEL. [*Jumps on bunk before stove.*] Who is there? Who is on the stove?

LUKA. [*Poking his head out.*] What?

PEPEL. Is it you?

LUKA. [*Composedly.*] I . . . I myself . . . Who else would it be? . . . Ah, my God!

PEPEL. [*Closes door L. U. E., looks for key, but does not find it.*] The devil . . . crawl down, pilgrim.

LUKA. All right . . . I'll crawl down. . . .

PEPEL. [*Roughly.*] Why did you climb up on the stove?

LUKA. Where should I go?

PEPEL. Why did n't you go out into the entry?

LUKA. Too cold, little brother . . . I am an old man. . . .

PEPEL. Did you hear?

LUKA. Without any trouble. Why not? I am not deaf. Ah, my boy, you are lucky, truly lucky.

PEPEL. [*Mistrustfully.*] I am lucky? How so?

LUKA. Because . . . I climbed up on the stove . . . that was your luck. . . .

PEPEL. Why did you move about?

LUKA. Because I feel hot . . . luckily for you, my orphan . . . and then I thought: if the boy does not lose his head . . . and strangle the old man. . . .

PEPEL. Yes, I might easily have done it . . . I hate him. . . .

LUKA. It would not have been any wonder . . . such things happen every day.

PEPEL. [*Laughing.*] Mm. . . . Have you yourself not done something of the kind some time?

LUKA. Listen, my boy, to what I tell you: this woman, keep well away from her. At no cost let her approach . . . She will soon get her husband out of the way more cleverly than you could ever manage it. Don't listen to her, this offspring of Satan! Look at me: not a hair left on my head . . . and why? The women, and no other reason. . . . I have known, perhaps, more women than I have had hairs on my head . . . and this Wassilissa . . . is worse than the pest. . . .

PEPEL. I don't know . . . whether to thank you . . . or, are you too . . .

LUKA. Say no more . . . Listen. If there is a girl, take the one you like best — take her by the hand and go away together; quite away, a long way off. . . .

PEPEL. [*Gloomily.*] We cannot know each other: who is good, who is bad. . . . Nothing certain is known to us. . . .

LUKA. Of what importance can that be? Man's ways vary . . . following the different desires of his heart; so he lives, good today, bad tomorrow. And if you love the girl, then pull out, settle it. Or go alone. You are young, you have still time enough to be enmeshed by a woman.

PEPEL. [*Takes him by the shoulder.*] No, but say — why do you tell me all this? . . .

LUKA. Hold on. Let me go . . . I must look after Anna. . . . Her throat is rattling. [*He goes to* ANNA'S *bed, strikes the curtain back, looks at the prostrate form and touches it with his hand.* PEPEL, *uneasy and depressed, follows him.*] Lord Jesus Christ, All Powerful! receive in peace the soul of this newcomer, thy servant Anna. . . .

PEPEL. [*Whispers.*] Is she dead?

[*Elevates himself to his full height and looks without approaching.*]

LUKA. [*Whispering.*] Her misery is ended. And where is her husband?

PEPEL. In the barroom — of course.

LUKA. He must be told. . . .

PEPEL. [*Shrinking.*] I do not love the dead.

LUKA. [*Goes to the door, L. U. E.*] Why should we love the dead? We must love the living . . . the living. . . .

PEPEL. I'll go with you.

LUKA. Are you afraid?

PEPEL. I love them not. . . .

[*Exit hastily, with* LUKA, *L. U. E. The stage remains empty for a few moments. Behind the door, L. U. E., is heard a dull, confused, unusual sound.*]

[*Enter the* ACTOR, *L. U. E. He remains standing on the platform, his hand on the door jamb, and cries.*]

ACTOR. Old man! Luka! Heh, where do you hide? Now I remember. Listen.

[*Tremblingly takes two steps forward, puts himself in an attitude and declaims.*]

And if humanity to holy truth
No path by searching finds,
Then all the world shall praise the fool,
Who spins a dream to mesh their minds.

[NATASHA *appears behind the* ACTOR *in the door.*]

[*He continues.*] Old man . . . listen!
And if the sun tomorrow shall forget
Upon the earth his light to stream,
Then all the world shall hail the fool,
With his illuminating red-gold dream.

NATASHA. [*Laughs.*] Look at the scarecrow. Maybe he has had one or two. . . .

ACTOR. [*Turns to her.*] A-ah, it is you! And where is our patriarch? Our loving, kind-hearted pilgrim. . . . There is nobody . . . at home. . . . Natasha, farewell, farewell.

NATASHA. [*Approaches him.*] You have just greeted me, and now you say farewell.

ACTOR. [*Steps in her way.*] I shall go. . . . I shall travel . . . when, soon as spring comes, I shall be far away.

NATASHA. Let me by. . . . Where shall you travel then?

ACTOR. I shall go to that city . . . I shall be cured. . . . You must leave here, too . . . Ophelia . . . get thee to a nunnery. . . . There is, you know, a hospital for organisms . . . for hard drinkers, so to speak . . . a splendid hospital . . . all marble . . . marble floors . . . light . . . cleanliness . . . good board — all free of charge! And marble floors, truly. I shall find it, this city, I'll be myself again. . . . Begin a new life. . . . I am on the way to regeneration . . . as King Lear said! Do you know too, Natasha . . . what my stage name is? Svertchkoff-Savolszhinski I'm called . . . nobody knows that here, nobody . . . here I am nameless . . . realize, if you can, how it hurts to lose your name? Even dogs have their names. [NATASHA *goes softly past the* ACTOR, *stands at* ANNA'S *bed and looks at the dead body.*] Without a name . . . where there is no name there is no man.

NATASHA. Look! . . . dear . . . why . . . she is dead. . . .

ACTOR. [*Shaking his head.*] Impossible. . . .

NATASHA. [*Stands aside.*] In God's name . . . look. . . .

BUBNOFF. [*Enters L. U. E.*] What is there to look at?

NATASHA. Anna is dead!

BUBNOFF. Then there will be no more coughing. [*Goes to* ANNA'S *bed, looks for a time at the dead body and then goes to his place.*] Somebody must tell Kleshtsch . . . it's his business. . . .

ACTOR. I'll go. I shall tell him . . . She, too, has lost her name. [*Exit* ACTOR *L. U. E.*]

NATASHA. [*In the centre of the room, to herself partly.*] And I . . . some time, shall languish so, and die forsaken in a cellar. . . .

BUBNOFF. [*Spreading out an old torn blanket on his shelf.*] What is the matter . . . what are you muttering?

NATASHA. Nothing . . . only to myself. . . .

BUBNOFF. Are you expecting Waska? Be careful with Waska. . . . He will knock your skull in, some day, for you. . . .

NATASHA. Is n't it all the same to me, who knocks it in? I'd rather have it done by him. . . .

BUBNOFF. [*Lies down.*] As you prefer . . . no funeral of mine.

NATASHA. It is the best thing for her that could happen . . . to die . . . yet it is pitiful . . . thou loving Master . . . what did she live for?

BUBNOFF. So with everybody — but, we live. Man is born, lives for a space of time, and dies. I will die too . . . and you will die . . . why pity the dead, then?

[LUKA, *the* TARTAR, KRIVOI ZOBA *and* KLESHTSCH *enter L. U. E.* KLESHTSCH *follows behind the others in shaking spirits.*]

NATASHA. Sh-sh . . . Anna!

KRIVOI ZOBA. We have already heard . . . God take her soul. . . .

TARTAR. [*To* KLESHTSCH.] She must be taken out. She must be carried into the entry. This is no place for the dead. The living person can have a bed. . . .

KLESHTSCH. [*Whispering.*] We will take her out. . . .

[*All stand around the body.* KLESHTSCH *looks at the remains of his wife over the shoulders of the others.*]

KRIVOI ZOBA. [*To the* TARTAR.] Do you think she will smell? No . . . while she was still alive she dried up. . . .

NATASHA. For God's sake . . . nobody pities her . . . if anybody had but said a word of kindness.

LUKA. Don't be hurt, my daughter. It is nothing. What have we to do with pitying the dead? We have not enough for each other. And you talk of pitying her.

BUBNOFF. [*Gapes.*] Why waste words . . . when she is dead — no words can help her any more . . . against sickness certain words can be used . . . against death, nothing.

TARTAR. [*Stepping aside.*] The police must be told. . . .

KRIVOI ZOBA. Naturally — that is the regulation. Kleshtsch, have you already reported it?

KLESHTSCH. No . . . now comes the funeral and I have only forty copecs in the world. . . .

KRIVOI ZOBA. Then borrow . . . or we will take up a collection . . . everybody give what he can, one five copecs, another ten . . . but the police must soon be told. Or else, at last, they will think you have beaten your wife to death . . . or something else.

[*Goes to the bunk, U. on which the* TARTAR *is lying, and attempts to lie down with him.*]

NATASHA. [*Goes to* BUBNOFF'S *bench.*] Now I shall dream about her . . . I always dream of the dead. . . . I am afraid to be alone. . . . It is so dark in the entry.

LUKA. [*Follows with his eyes.*] Be afraid of the living . . . that is what I say to you. . . .

NATASHA. Take me up-stairs, daddy. . . .

LUKA. Come . . . come . . . I will go with you. [*Exit both L. U. E. Pause.*]

KRIVOI ZOBA. [*Yawns.*] Oh, oh! [*To the* TARTAR.] It will soon be spring now, Hassan. . . . Then there will be a little bit of sun for you and me. The peasants now are repairing their plows and harrows . . . they will go to the field soon . . . hm — yes . . . and we, Hassan. He is already snoring, cursed Mohammedan.

BUBNOFF. The Tartars are fond of sleep.

KLESHTSCH. [*Standing in the middle of the room staring stupidly before himself.*] What shall I begin to do now?

KRIVOI ZOBA. Lie down and sleep . . . that's all. . . .

KLESHTSCH. [*Whispers.*] And . . . she! What shall be done with her?

[*Nobody answers him.*]

[*Enter* SAHTIN *and the* ACTOR, *L. U. E.*]

ACTOR. [*Cries.*] Old man! My true adviser. . . .

SAHTIN. Miklucka-Maclai comes . . . ho, ho!

ACTOR. The thing is settled! Patriarch, where is the city . . . where are you?

SAHTIN. Fata Morgana! He has deluded you . . . there are no cities . . . No, no people . . . there is nothing at all!

ACTOR. Liar. . . .

TARTAR. [*Springing up.*] Where is the proprietor? I'll see the proprietor! If we can't sleep here, he shall charge us nothing . . . the dead . . . the drunken. . . .

[*Exit quickly, R. U. E.* SAHTIN *whistles after him.*]

BUBNOFF. [*Awakened.*] Go to bed brats, make no noise, the night is for sleep. . . .

ACTOR. True . . . I have here [*rubs his forehead*]. "Our nets have caught the dead," as it says in a . . . chanson, from Beranger.[1]

SAHTIN. The dead hear not. The dead feel not. Howl . . . shout as much as you like . . . the dead hear not!

[LUKA *appears in the door.*]

ACT III

[*Translator's Note:* In the Russian, the third act takes place upon a new scene, but as the scene of the previous acts may be employed without necessitating any change in dialogue or construction, the stage directions given in this act have the old scene in view. The new scene is described as follows:]

A vacant place between two buildings, filled with rubbish and overgrown with weeds. In the background, a high brick fire-wall, which covers the heavens. Near it a small elder-tree. On the right, a dark wall of reinforced wooden beams, part of a barn or stable. On the left, the gray wall of KOSTILIOFF'S *lodging-house, its rough plaster adhering only in places. This wall runs diagonally, the rear wall of the building, the corner being about the middle of the scene, forming with the fire-wall a narrow passageway. In the gray wall there are two windows, one on a level with the earth, the other four or five feet higher and nearer the rear. Against the gray wall lies a great sled, overturned, with a beam about three yards long. Near the stable wall on the right is a heap of old boards and hewn beams.*

It is evening, the setting sun throws a red light against the fire-wall. Spring has just begun and the snow is scarcely melted. The black twigs of the elder-tree have not begun to swell.

On the beam, side by side, sit NATASHA *and* NASTIAH. *On the pile of boards* LUKA *and the* BARON. KLESHTSCH *lies on a heap of wood near the right wall.* BUBNOFF *is looking out of the lower window.*

NASTIAH. [*With closed eyes, moving her head in time to the story, which she is telling in a singsong voice.*] In the night, then, he came to the garden, to the summer-bower, as we had arranged . . . I had waited long, trembling for fear and grief . . . and he, too, was trembling from head to foot, and chalk white, but in his hand he held a . . . pistol. . . .

NATASHA. [*Nibbling at sunflower seeds.*] *Just* listen . . . these students are all as mad as March hares.

NASTIAH. And in a terrible voice, he said to me: my true love. . . .

BUBNOFF. Ha, ha, my "true" love, did he say?

BARON. Be still there, let her humbug in peace — you don't have to listen, if it don't please you . . . go on.

NASTIAH. My heart's distraction, said he, my golden treasure; my parents refuse to allow me, said he, to marry you, and threaten me with their curses if I do not give you up, and so I must, said he, take my life . . . and his pistol was frightfully large, and loaded with ten bullets. . . . Farewell, said he, true friend of my heart! My decision is irrevocable . . . I cannot live without you. But I answered him,

[1] In reality a quotation from Pushkin.

my never-to-be-forgotten friend . . . my Raoul. . . .

BUBNOFF. [*Astonished.*] What's his name . . . Graul?

BARON. You are mistaken, Nastya! The last time you called him Gaston.

NASTIAH. [*Springing up.*] Silence! You vagabond curs! Can you understand what love is . . . real, genuine love! And I . . . I have tasted this genuine love. [*To the* BARON.] You unworthy scamp . . . You were an educated man . . . you say, have drunk your coffee in bed. . . .

LUKA. Have patience! Don't scold her! Show human beings some consideration. . . . It is not what man says but why he says it, — that's the point. Keep on, my love — they don't mean anything.

BUBNOFF. Always laying on the bright hues, raven . . . Nyah, cut loose again!

BARON. Go on.

NATASHA. Pay no attention to them . . . who are they, anyway? They only speak out of envy . . . because they have nothing to tell about themselves . . .

NASTIAH. [*Sits down again.*] I don't want to . . . I won't tell anything more . . . if they don't like to believe it . . . and laugh about it. [*Suddenly brightens up. Is silent a few seconds, closes her eyes again and begins in a loud and rapid voice, keeping time with her hand, while in the distance ringing music is heard.*] And I answered him: Joy of my life! O my glittering star! Without you, I too, could not live . . . because I love you madly and must love you always, as long as my heart beats in my bosom! But, said I, rob yourself not of your young life . . . for look, your dear parents whose single joy you are — they stand in need of you. Give me up . . . I would rather pine away . . . out of longing for you, my love . . . I am — alone . . . I am — wholly yours . . . yes, let me die . . . what matters it . . . I am good for nothing . . . and have nothing . . . absolutely nothing . . .

[*Covers her face with her hands and cries softly.*]

NATASHA. [*Goes to her side, quietly.*] Don't.

[LUKA *strokes* NASTIAH'S *head, laughing.*]

BUBNOFF. [*Laughs aloud.*] Oh . . . ho . . . a deceiving minx, . . . eh?

BARON. [*Laughs aloud.*] Now — grandfather — do you believe what she tells? She gets it all out of her book . . . out of "Disastrous Love," all nonsense. Drop it.

NATASHA. What is that to you? You'd better keep still. God has punished you enough. . . .

NASTIAH. [*Furious.*] You! Tell us, where is your soul!

LUKA. [*Takes her by the hand.*] Come my love. Do not be angry . . . They mean nothing, I know . . . I — believe you. You are right, and not they . . . if you yourself believe it, then you have had just such true love . . . Certainly, quite certainly. And he there, your lover, don't be angry. . . . He only laughs perhaps . . . about it . . . because he is envious . . . No doubt in his whole life he never felt anything genuine . . . No, certainly not. Come!

NASTIAH. [*Presses her arm against her breast.*] Grandfather. Before God . . . it is true! It is all true. . . . A French student . . . Gastoscha was his name . . . and he had a little black beard . . . he always wore patent leather shoes. . . . May lightning strike me instantly if it is n't true! And how he loved me . . . oh, how he loved me.

LUKA. I am sure. Say no more. I believe you. He wore patent leather shoes, you say? Aye, aye, and you have naturally loved him too. [*Exit both L. U. E.*]

BARON. A stupid thing, good hearted but stupid, intolerably stupid.

BUBNOFF. How can a man lie so unceasingly? Just like before a coroner.

NATASHA. Falsehood must indeed be pleasanter than the truth . . . I . . . too.

BARON. What "I too?" Say more.

NATASHA. I too, think of lots of them . . . to myself . . . and wait. . . .

BARON. For what?

NATASHA. [*Laughing embarrassed.*] Just so . . . perhaps, think I . . . somebody will come tomorrow . . . some strange person . . . or there may happen . . . something that never happened before. . . . I have already waited long . . . I still am waiting

. . . and after all . . . to look at it right . . . can anything great be expected? [*Pause.*]

BARON. [*Laughing.*] We can expect nothing at all. . . . I least of all — I expect nothing more. For me everything has already been. All is past . . . at an end . . . what more?

NATASHA. Sometimes, too, I imagine, that tomorrow . . . I will die suddenly . . . which fills me with fear. . . . In summer we think willingly of death . . . then comes the storm, and every moment one may be struck by lightning. . . .

BARON. Your life has not been laid in easy lines. . . . Your sister has the disposition of a fiend.

NATASHA. Whose life is easy? All have it hard, as far as I can see. . . .

KLESHTSCH. [*Who has previously lain silent and motionless, springing up.*] All? That is not true! Not all! If it was hard for all . . . then each of us could stand it . . . there would be nothing to complain about.

BUBNOFF. Say, are you possessed by the devil? Why howl?

[KLESHTSCH *lies down again and stares vacantly.*]

BARON. I must see what Nastya is doing . . . I'll have to make up with her . . . or we shall have no more money for whiskey.

BUBNOFF. People can never stop lying! I can understand Nastyka; she is accustomed to painting her cheeks. . . . So she tries it with the soul . . . paints her little soul red . . . but the rest, why do they do it? Luka, for example . . . turns everything into stories . . . without ceremony . . . why does he always lie? . . . at his age? . . .

BARON. [*Goes L. U. E. laughing.*] All of us have gray souls. . . . We like to lay on a bit of red.

LUKA. [*Enters from L. U. E.*] Tell me, Baron, why do you torment the girl? Let her alone. . . . Can't she cry to pass the time away . . . she only sheds tears for pleasure . . . what harm can that do you?

BARON. She is a soft-brained thing, pilgrim . . . It's hard to swallow . . . today Raoul, tomorrow Gaston . . . and everlastingly one and the same. But anyway, I'll make up with her again. [*Exit L. U. E.*]

LUKA. Go, treat her with friendliness . . . treat every one with friendliness — injure no one.

NATASHA. How good you are, grandfather . . . how is it that you are so good?

LUKA. I am good, you say. Nyah . . . if it is true, all right. . . . [*Behind the red wall is heard soft singing and accordeon playing.*] But you see, my girl — there must be some one to be good . . . We must have pity on mankind. Christ, remember, had pity for us all and so taught us to be likewise. Have pity when there is still time, believe me, it is very good. I was once, for example, employed as a watchman, at a country place which belonged to an engineer, not far from the city of Tomsk, in Siberia. The house stood in the middle of the forest, an out-of-the-way location . . . and it was winter and I was all alone in the country house. . . . It was beautiful there . . . magnificent! And once . . . I heard them scrambling up!

NATASHA. Thieves!

LUKA. Yes. They crept higher and I took my rifle and went outside. I looked up: two men . . . as they were opening a window and so busy that they did not see anything of me at all . . . I cried to them: Heh there . . . get out of that . . . and would you think it, they fell on me with a hand ax . . . I warned them — Halt, I cried, or else I fire . . . then I aimed first at one and then at the other. They fell on their knees saying, pardon us. I was pretty hot . . . on account of the hand ax, you remember. You devils, I cried, I told you to clear out and you did n't . . . and now, I said, one of you go into the brush and get a switch. It was done: And now, I commanded, one of you stretch out on the ground, and the other thrash him . . . and so they whipped each other at my command. And when they had each had a sound beating, they said to me: Grandfather, said they, for the sake of Christ give us a piece of bread. We have n't a bite in our bodies. These, my daughter, were the thieves [*laughs*] who had fallen upon me with the hand ax. Yes . . . they were a

pair of splendid fellows. . . . I said to them: If only you had asked for bread! Then they answered: We had gotten past that . . . we had asked and asked and nobody would give us anything . . . endurance was worn out . . . nyah, and so they remained with me the whole winter. One of them, Stephen by name, liked to take the rifle and go into the woods . . . and the other, Jakoff, was constantly ill, always coughing . . . the three of us watched the place, and when spring came, they said farewell, grandfather, and went away — to Russia. . . .

NATASHA. Were they convicts, escaping?

LUKA. They were . . . fugitives . . . they had left their colony . . . a pair of splendid fellows. . . . If I had not had pity on them — who knows what would have happened. They might have killed me. . . . Then they would be taken to court again, put in prison, sent back to Siberia . . . why all that? You learn nothing good in prison, nor in Siberia . . . but a man, what can he not learn. Man may teach his fellowman something good . . . very simply. [*Pause.*]

BUBNOFF. Hm . . . yes . . . and I . . . can never lie. Why should I do it? Always out with the truth, that is my way of thinking, whether it pleases or not. Why trouble to be considerate?

KLESHTSCH. [*Springing up, as though stabbed, crying.*] What is the truth? Where is the truth — where! [*Beats with his hands on his torn clothes.*] There is the truth — there! No work. . . . No strength . . . in the limbs — that is the truth! No shelter . . . no shelter. . . . It is time to die, that is your truth, curse it! What is it to me, this — truth? Only let me sigh in peace — let me sigh. What have I done? Why the devil should we have truth? Curse it, we can't live . . . that is the truth!

BUBNOFF. Just listen . . . he is full of matter. . . .

LUKA. The good Lord . . . but say, my friend, you. . . .

KLESHTSCH. [*Trembling with excitement.*] I have heard you talk of the truth. You, pilgrim — you consoling every one . . . and I say to you: I hate every one. And this truth too, this accursed truth . . . do you understand? Mark you, accursed shall truth be.

[*Hurries out, L. U. E., looking back as he goes.*]

LUKA. Aye, aye, aye; but he is out of his head . . . and where can he be running?

NATASHA. He rages away like one gone mad.

BUBNOFF. He laid it all down in the proper order . . . as in a theatre . . . the same thing happens often . . . he is not accustomed to life. . . .

PEPEL. [*Enters slowly L. U. E.*] Peace to you honest folks! Nyah, Luka, old devil — telling more stories?

LUKA. You ought to have seen just now, a man crying out.

PEPEL. Kleshtsch, you mean, him? What is the matter with him now? He ran past me, as if he were crazy. . . .

LUKA. You will run the same way too, when once it gets into your heart. . . .

PEPEL. [*Sits.*] I can't endure him . . . he is embittered, and proud. [*He imitates* KLESHTSCH.] "I am a workingman . . ." as though others were inferior to him . . . Work indeed, if it gives you pleasure . . . but why do you need to be so proud about it? If you estimate men by work, then a horse is better than any man. He pulls a wagon — and holds his mouth about it. Natasha . . . are your people at home?

NATASHA. They have gone to the graveyard . . . and then they were to go to church.

PEPEL. You're therefore at leisure . . . that happens seldom.

LUKA. [*Thoughtfully to* BUBNOFF.] You say — the truth . . . but the truth is not a cure for every ill . . . you cannot always heal the soul with truth . . . for example, the following case: I knew a man who believed in the land of justice. . . .

BUBNOFF. In wh-at?

LUKA. In the land of justice. There must be, said he, a land of justice somewhere in the world . . . in which unusual men, so to speak, must live . . . good men, who respect each other, who help each other when they can . . . everything there

is good and beautiful. It is a country which every man should seek. . . . He was poor and things went bad with him . . . so bad, indeed, that soon nothing remained for him to do but to lie down and die — but still he did not lose courage. He often laughed and said to himself: it makes no difference — I can bear it! A little longer yet will I wait — then throw this life aside and go into the land of justice . . . it was his only pleasure . . . this land of justice. . . .

PEPEL. Yes, and . . . Has he gone there?

BUBNOFF. Where! Ha, ha, ha!

LUKA. At that time there was brought to the place — the thing happened in Siberia — an exile, a man of learning . . . with books and maps and all sorts of arts . . . And the sick man spoke to the sage: Tell me, I implore you, where lies the land of justice, and how can one succeed in getting there. Then the learned man opened his books and spread his maps out, and searched and searched, but he found the land of justice nowhere. Everything else was correct, all countries were shown — the land of justice alone did not appear.

PEPEL. [*Softly.*] No? Was it really not there? [BUBNOFF *laughs.*]

NATASHA. What are you laughing at? Go on, grandfather.

LUKA. The man would not believe him . . . It must be there, said he . . . look more closely! For all your books and maps, said he, are not worth a whistle if the land of justice is not shown on them. The learned man felt himself insulted. My maps, said he, are absolutely correct, and a land of justice nowhere exists. So, the other was furious. What, he cried — have I now lived and lived and lived, endured and endured, and always believed there was such a country. And according to your plans there is none! That is robbery . . . and he said to the learned man: You good-for-nothing scamp . . . you are a cheat and no sage. Then he gave him a sound blow over the skull, and still another. . . . [*Is silent a few moments.*] And then he went home and choked himself . . .

[*All are silent.* LUKA *looks silently at* PEPEL *and* NATASHA.]

PEPEL. The devil take him . . . the story is it not cheerful. . . .

NATASHA. He could n't stand it . . . to be so disappointed.

BUBNOFF. [*In a surly tone.*] All tales. . . .

PEPEL. Hm, yes . . . there is your land of justice . . . it was not to be found, it seems. . . .

NATASHA. One should have sympathy for him . . . the poor man. . . .

BUBNOFF. All imagination . . . ha, ha! The land of justice — stuff! Ha, ha, ha, ha! [*Exit into kitchen.*]

LUKA. [*Looking after him.*] He laughs, ah yes. [*Pause.*] Yes, children . . . farewell . . . I shall leave you soon. . . .

PEPEL. Where do you journey, then?

LUKA. To Little Russia. . . . I hear they have discovered a new religion there. . . . I will see what it is . . . yes . . . Men search and search, always looking for something better . . . may God give them patience.

PEPEL. Think you, they will find it?

LUKA. Who? Mankind? Certainly they shall find it. . . . He who yearns . . . he finds . . . who searches zealously — he finds!

NATASHA. I wish them a happy journey. I hope they will find something.

LUKA. That shall they surely do. But we must help them, my daughter . . . must respect them. . . .

NATASHA. How shall I help them? I am myself . . . so helpless. . . .

PEPEL. [*Restrained.*] Listen to me, Natasha . . . I want to speak to you . . . in his presence . . . he knows it . . . come . . . with me!

NATASHA. Where? To Prison?

PEPEL. I have already told you that I will give up stealing. By God, I will! When I say a thing, I keep my word. I have learned to read and write . . . I can easily make a living. [*With a movement of the hand towards* LUKA.] He advised me — to try it in Siberia . . . to go of my own accord. . . . How does it strike you — shall we go? Believe me, I am sick of this life. Ah, Natasha! I see indeed how things are . . . I have consoled my conscience with the thought that others steal more than I — and are still respected . . .

but how does that help me . . . not in the least. But I have no regret . . . nor, as I believe, any conscience. . . . But I feel one thing: that I must live in a different way. I must live better . . . I must live . . . so that I can respect myself. . . .

LUKA. Quite right, my boy. May God be with you . . . May Christ help you! Well resolved: a man must respect himself . . .

PEPEL. From childhood, I have been — only a thief . . . Always I was called, Waska, the pickpocket, Waska, the son of a thief! See, it was of no consequence to me, as long as they would have it so . . . so they would have it . . . I was a thief, perhaps, only out of spite . . . because nobody came along to call me anything except — thief . . . You call me something else, Natasha . . . now?

NATASHA. [*In low spirits.*] I do not quite believe it all . . . words are words . . . and then . . . I don't know. . . . Today I am disquieted . . . my heart is despondent. As though I dreaded something. You would not begin today, Wassili. . . .

PEPEL. When else, then! This is not the first time I have spoken. . . .

NATASHA. Shall I go with you. . . . I love you . . . not too much. . . . Sometimes I like you . . . but then at times I cannot look at you . . . in any case I do not love . . . when one loves, one sees no fault in the beloved . . . and I see faults in you. . . .

PEPEL. You will soon love me, have no fear! You will become accustomed to me . . . only say "yes." For over a year I have been watching you, and I see that you are an honest girl . . . a good, true woman . . . I love you with all my heart.

[WASSILISSA, *still in gay street dress, appears at the door at the head of the stair, R. U. E. She stands with one hand on the balustrade and the other on the door post and laughs.*]

NATASHA. So . . . you love me with all your heart, and my sister. . . .

PEPEL. [*Embarrassed.*] What do I care for her? Her kind is nothing. . . .

LUKA. It does not matter, my daughter. One eats turnips when he has no bread. . . .

PEPEL. [*Gloomily.*] Have pity on me. It is no easy life that I lead — friendless; pursued like a wolf. . . . I sink like a man in a swamp . . . whatever I clutch is slimy and rotten . . . nothing is firm . . . your sister though, would be different . . . if she were not so avaricious . . . I would have risked everything for her . . . If she had only kept faith with me . . . but her heart is set on something else . . . her heart is full of greed . . . and longs for freedom — and only that longing in order to become more dissolute. She cannot help me . . . but you — like a young fir-tree, you are prickly but you give support. . . .

LUKA. And I say to you: take him, my daughter, take him. He is a good-hearted boy. All you must do is to remind him often that he is good . . . so that he will not forget it. He will soon believe you. Only say to him, often, Waska, you are a good man . . . don't forget it! Think it over, my love — what else shall you begin? Your sister — she is a bad lot: and of her husband — nothing good can be said either: no words can be found to express his baseness . . . and this whole life here . . . where shall you find a way out? . . . But Waska . . . he is a lusty fellow.

NATASHA. I cannot find a way . . . I know that . . . I have already thought it over myself . . . but I . . . whom can I trust? . . . I see no way out. . . .

PEPEL. There is but one way . . . but I shall not let you take it . . . I would kill you first. . . .

NATASHA. [*Laughing.*] Just look . . . I am not yet your wife, and you will already kill me.

PEPEL. [*Putting his arms around her.*] Say "yes," Natasha. It will soon be well. . . .

NATASHA. [*Presses him affectionately.*] . . . One thing I will tell you, Wassili. . . . And God shall be my witness: if you strike me a single time . . . or insult me . . . that shall be the end . . . either I hang myself, or . . .

PEPEL. May this hand wither up, if I touch you. . . .

LUKA. Don't be troubled, my love, you can believe him. You are necessary to his happiness, and he to yours. . . .

WASSILISSA. [*From above.*] And the match is made. May God give you love and harmony.

NATASHA. They are already back . . . Oh, God! They have seen us . . . ah, Wassili!

PEPEL. What are you afraid of? Nobody dares touch you now!

WASSILISSA. Do not be afraid, Natalya. He will not strike you . . . He can neither strike, nor love . . . I know him.

LUKA. [*Softly.*] Ah, such a woman . . . a venomous snake. . . .

WASSILISSA. He is only bold with words. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. [*Enters R. from kitchen.*] Nataschka! What are you doing here, lazy-bones? Gossiping, eh! Complaining about your relatives: the samovar is not in order, the table not cleared off.

NATASHA. [*Going R. Kitchen.*] You were going to church, I thought. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. It does not concern you what we are going to do. Mind your own business . . . do what you are told.

PEPEL. Shut up. She is not your servant now. . . . Natalya, don't budge . . . don't move a finger.

NATASHA. It is not for you to give orders here. . . . Too soon yet for orders.

[*Exit R.*]

PEPEL. [*To* KOSTILIOFF.] Enough of that. You have mortified the poor girl enough! She is mine now.

KOSTILIOFF. You-u? When did you buy her? What did you pay for her?

[WASSILISSA *laughs aloud.*]

LUKA. Wasja! Get out. . . .

PEPEL. You're having a good time over me, are n't you? You may weep yet!

WASSILISSA. What do you say! I am afraid of you. [*Laughs.*]

LUKA. Go away, Wassili! Don't you see how she plays with you . . . pricks you on — can't you understand?

PEPEL. Ah . . . so! [*To* WASSILISSA.] Don't give yourself any trouble. What you want will not be done.

WASSILISSA. And what I do not want done, will not be done, Wasja!

PEPEL. [*Threatens her with his fist.*] We shall see . . . [*Exit L. U. E.*]

WASSILISSA. [*As she goes out R. U. E.*] I will prepare a glorious wedding for you.

KOSTILIOFF. [*Advances on* LUKA.] So . . . What are you stirring up, old man?

LUKA. Nothing, old man.

KOSTILIOFF. Um! You are going to leave us, I hear!

LUKA. It is time.

KOSTILIOFF. Where to?

LUKA. Wherever my nose points.

KOSTILIOFF. You are going to become a vagabond again. You seem to be a rolling stone. . . .

LUKA. Resting iron is rusting iron, says the proverb.

KOSTILIOFF. That may be true of iron, but a man must remain in one place . . . Men cannot be tumbling about like cock-roaches in the kitchen . . . first here, then there. . . . A man must have a place which he can call home. . . . He must not be crawling aimlessly about the earth.

LUKA. And if one — is at home every where?

KOSTILIOFF. Then he is only — a tramp . . . a good-for-nothing fellow . . . a man must make himself useful . . . he must work. . . .

LUKA. What's that you're saying?

KOSTILIOFF. Yes, indeed! What else then? . . . You call yourself a wanderer, a pilgrim. . . . What is a pilgrim? A pilgrim is one who goes his own way — keeps to himself . . . has peculiarities, so to speak, is unlike other people . . . that's what we understand about a true pilgrim. . . . He ponders and unravels . . . and at last discovers something . . . perhaps the truth, who knows. . . . He holds his truth for himself, and remains silent. If he is a true pilgrim, he remains silent. . . . Or, he speaks so that no one understands him. . . . He has no wish to be gratified, does n't turn people's heads, does not butt-in. How others live — gives him no concern. . . . He lives proudly and in rectitude . . . searches out the forest and the unfrequented places . . . where no one comes. He is in nobody's way, condemns nobody . . . but prays for all . . . for all the sinners of this world . . . for me, for you . . . for all! He flies from the vanity of this world

— to prayer. So it is. [*Pause.*] And you . . . what sort of a pilgrim are you . . . you have not even a passport. . . . Every law-abiding citizen must have a passport . . . all orderly people have passports . . . yes. . . .

LUKA. There are people and there are men. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. Don't get funny! Don't give us any riddle . . . I am not your fool. . . . What do you mean by people — and men?

LUKA. This is no riddle. I mean — there are stony fields which are not worth sowing . . . and there are fertile fields . . . whatever is sown thereon — yields a harvest . . . so it is. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. And what does all this mean?

LUKA. You, for example . . . If God himself said to you: "Michailo, be a man," it is certain that it would be useless . . . As you are, so you will remain for all time. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. Ah . . . and do you know that my wife's uncle is on the police force? And if I . . .

WASSILISSA. [*Enters R.*] Michailo Ivanitsch, come drink your tea. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. [*To* LUKA.] Hear me, you — keep out of this row — leave my house. . . .

WASSILISSA. Yes, put on your knapsack, old man . . . your tongue is too long . . . who knows . . . perhaps you may be an escaped convict.

KOSTILIOFF. Be sure that you disappear today . . . or else . . . we shall see.

LUKA. Or else you will call your uncle, eh? Call him . . . tell him, you can catch a convict here, uncle . . . then your uncle will receive a reward . . . three copecs. . . .

BUBNOFF. [*Looking out from over the stove.*] What business are you haggling about . . . what is it . . . for three copecs? . . .

LUKA. We are trying to sell me.

WASSILISSA. [*To her husband.*] Let's go.

BUBNOFF. For three copecs. Take care old man . . . or they will sell you for one copec. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. [*To* BUBNOFF.] What are you staring out of there for, like a hobgoblin out of a tunnel?

[*Approaches R. with* WASSILISSA.]

WASSILISSA. How many blackbirds there are in the world . . . how many knaves.

LUKA. I wish you a good appetite.

WASSILISSA. [*Turns to him.*] Take good care of yourself — you dirty toadstool.

[*Exit with* KOSTILIOFF *R.*]

LUKA. Tonight — I leave.

BUBNOFF. You'll do right. It is always best to go before it is too late . . .

LUKA. Quite right.

BUBNOFF. I speak from experience. I took my own departure once at the right moment, and saved myself a trip to Siberia.

LUKA. What do you say?

BUBNOFF. It is true. The case was thus: my wife had a love affair with my assistant . . . and a very good assistant he was, I must admit . . . he could make the most beautiful polar bear furs from dog skins . . . cat skins he dyed into Kangaroos . . . into musk rats . . . into anything you could wish . . . a very clever fellow. My wife was madly in love with him. They hung on each other so much that I feared every moment they would poison me or put me out of the world in some other way. I whipped my wife often, and my assistant whipped me . . . and I tell you he made a savage job of it, too. Once he pulled half my beard out and broke a rib for me. Naturally I was not particular when I struck back . . . gave my wife one over the skull with an iron yardstick . . . we were generally fighting like good fellows. Finally I saw there was no chance for me . . . they would surely fix it for me. Then I arranged a plan — to kill my wife . . . I had quite made up my mind. But in the nick of time — I came to my senses — and cleared out of the row. . . .

LUKA. It was better so, let them be quiet there making polar bears out of dogs.

BUBNOFF. Worse luck, the shop was in her name . . . only what I had on my back I kept . . . though, to speak honestly, I would have drunk the place up in no time . . . I am a glorious drunk you understand.

LUKA. A glorious drunk.

BUBNOFF. Oh, a glorious drunk. When things come my way I soak up everything

in sight. And then I am lazy . . . nothing is more terrible than work.

[SAHTIN *and the* ACTOR *come in quarreling.*]

SAHTIN. Nonsense! You will go nowhere. You're talking stupid stuff. Tell me, pilgrim . . . what spark have you been throwing into this burned stump?

ACTOR. You lie! Grandfather, tell him that he lies. I go. I have worked today. I have cleaned the pavement . . . and drunk no whiskey. What do you say now? There, see — two fifteeners, and I am sober.

SAHTIN. It is all wrong! Give it to me, I'll spend it on drink . . . or lose it at cards.

ACTOR. Let it alone. It is for the journey.

LUKA. [*To* SAHTIN.] Listen you — why do you try to upset his resolution?

SAHTIN. "Tell me, you wizard, darling of the gods — what shall fate with my future do?"[1] Moneyless, brother, I have played everything away, broke. But the world is not lost, old man, there are still sharper knaves than I.

LUKA. You are a lusty brother, Constantine . . . a loveable man. . . .

BUBNOFF. You actor, come here.

[*The* ACTOR *goes to the stove and talks apart with* BUBNOFF.]

SAHTIN. When I was still young, I was a jolly chicken. I look back on it with pleasure. . . . I had the soul of a man. . . . I danced splendidly, acted, was a famous bachelor . . . simply phenomenal!

LUKA. How then have you gotten so far afield . . . hm?

SAHTIN. You are curious, old man. You would know all . . . and what for?

LUKA. I always like to know about . . . mankind's difficulties . . . and I do not understand you, Constantine. When I look at you; such a loveable man . . . so sensible . . . then suddenly . . .

SAHTIN. The prison, grandfather. Four years and seven months I have done, and coming out, a discharged convict, I found my course in life shut up. . . .

LUKA. Oh, oh, oh! Why then were you imprisoned?

SAHTIN. On account of a deceiver — whom I killed in a passion. . . . In prison, too, I learned my art of card playing. . . .

LUKA. And why did you kill him? On account of a woman?

SAHTIN. On account of my own sister. . . . Stop questioning . . . it annoys me. . . . It is . . . an old story . . . my sister is dead . . . nine years have gone by . . . she was a splendid creature . . . my sister. . . .

LUKA. You take life easily. It falls more heavily on others. . . . Did you just now, for example, hear the locksmith crying out — oh, oh!

SAHTIN. Kleshtsch?

LUKA. The same. No work, he cried . . . absolutely none. . . .

SAHTIN. You will get accustomed to that. . . . Tell me, what shall I now begin to do?

LUKA. [*Softly.*] Look, there he comes. . . .

[KLESHTSCH *enters slowly L. U. E. with sunken head.*]

SAHTIN. Heh, there, widower! What are you hanging your head for? What are you brooding over?

KLESHTSCH. My skull is splitting from it. . . . What shall I do now! My tools are gone. . . . The funeral has eaten everything up. . . .

SAHTIN. I will give you a piece of advice. Do nothing at all. Burden the earth with your weight — simple enough.

KLESHTSCH. You advise well. . . . I — still am ashamed before others.

SAHTIN. Drop it . . . people are not ashamed to let you live worse than a dog. Just imagine if you would not work, and I would not work . . . and still hundreds and thousands of others would not work . . . and finally everybody — understand? — everybody quit work and nobody did anything at all — what, do you think, would happen then?

KLESHTSCH. Everybody would starve. . . .

LUKA. [*To* SAHTIN.] There is such a sect. "Jumpers," they call themselves. . . . They talk exactly like you. . . .

SAHTIN. I know them. . . . They are not at all such fools, pilgrim.

[*From* KOSTILIOFF'S *room R. U. E. screaming.*]

[1] Citation from Pushkin.

NATASHA. [*Within.*] What are you doing — stop . . . what have I done?

LUKA. [*Disquieted.*] Who is screaming there? Was it not Natasha? Ah, you. . . .

[*From* KOSTILIOFF'S *room is heard a loud alarm, and then from the kitchen the sound of crashing dishes.*]

KOSTILIOFF. [*Within, screaming.*] A— ah — you cat — you . . . heathen.

WASSILISSA. [*Within.*] Wait . . . I'll give her . . . so . . . so . . . and so. . . .

NATASHA. [*Within.*] Help! They are killing me!

SAHTIN. [*Runs up steps R. U. E. shouting.*] Heh, there! What are you howling about?

LUKA. [*Walks about uneasily.*] Waska . . . he must be called. . . . Wassili. . . . Oh, God! . . . Children, my dears.

ACTOR. [*Hurries out, L. U. E.*] I'll bring him . . . right away. . . .

BUBNOFF. They 're treating the poor girl badly these days.

SAHTIN. Come, pilgrim. . . . We will be witnesses. . . .

LUKA. [*Exit after* SAHTIN *R.*] Why witnesses? Too often, already, have I been a witness. If Waska would only come . . . oh! this is terrible! terrible!

NATASHA. [*Within.*] Sister . . . dear sister . . . wah . . . wa . . . a. . . .

BUBNOFF. Now they have stopped her mouth. . . . I'll see myself.

[*The noise in* KOSTILIOFF'S *room is weaker, and nothing comes from the kitchen.*]

KOSTILIOFF. [*Within.*] Halt!

[*A door is slammed within, and the whole noise is cut off as if by a hatchet. On the stage, silence. . . . It is twilight.*]

KLESHTSCH. [*Sits on bench U. taking no part, and rubbing his hands together. Then he begins to mumble to himself, at first indistinctly. Then louder.*] How then? . . . a man must live. [*Louder.*] At least a shelter . . . but no, not that . . . not even a corner where I can lie down. . . . Nothing but the bare man . . . helpless and deserted.

[*Exit bent over, L. U. E. slowly. For a few moments, ominous silence. Then somewhere within, on the R. a terrible noise, a chaos of tones, louder and louder and nearer and nearer. Then a single voice is heard.*]

WASSILISSA. [*Within.*] I am her sister. Let me go. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. [*Within.*] What right have you to interfere?

WASSILISSA. [*Within.*] You convict!

SAHTIN. [*Within.*] Bring Waska . . . be quick . . . Zoba, strike.

[*A policeman's whistle is heard.*]

TARTAR. [*Jumps down the steps, R. U. E., his right hand bound up.*] What sort of laws are these . . . to murder in broad daylight?

[KRIVOI ZOBA *hurries in L. U. E., followed by* KOSTILIOFF.]

KRIVOI ZOBA. Now, he got it from me.

MEDVIEDEFF. How did you come to strike him?

TARTAR. And you — do you not know what your duty is?

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Running after* KRIVOI ZOBA.] Stop! Give me my whistle back.

[*Exit L. U. E.*]

KOSTILIOFF. [*Enters R. U. E.*] Abram! Catch him . . . hold him tight. He has killed me. . . .

[*Down the steps R. U. E. come* KVASCHNYA *and* NASTIAH. *They help* NATASHA, *who is badly beaten up.* SAHTIN *runs up the stairs, bumping into* WASSILISSA, *who is throwing her arms about and trying to strike her sister.* ALYOSCHKA *is jumping around like one possessed. He whistles in* WASSILISSA'S *ear and howls. A couple of ragged fellows and some men and women appear L. U. E.*]

SAHTIN. [*To* WASSILISSA.] Enough, you damned owl!

WASSILISSA. Away, convict. If it costs me my life, I will tear her to pieces.

KVASCHNYA. [*Leads* NATASHA *aside.*] Stop, Karpovna . . . for shame! How can you be so inhuman?

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Re-enters L. U. E., takes* SAHTIN *by the collar.*] Aha! Now I have you!

SAHTIN. Krivoi Zoba. Strike . . . Waska, Waska.

[*All storm the entrance, L. U. E.* NATASHA *is taken to the bed, L.*]

[PEPEL *enters L. U. E. Pushes them away.*]

PEPEL. Where is Natasha, you?

KOSTILIOFF. [*Crouches on the steps R. U. E.*] Abram! Catch Waska . . . brother, help catch Waska . . . the thief . . . the robber. . . .

PEPEL. There, you old goat.

[*Strikes* KOSTILIOFF *brutally. He falls so that his body lies on the landing, his legs hidden up the stairs.* PEPEL *hurries to* NATASHA.]

WASSILISSA. Fix Waska . . . friends . . . do up the thief!

MEDVIEDEFF. [*To* SAHTIN.] You should n't have interfered . . . this is a family affair here. They are all related to each other . . . and who are you?

PEPEL. [*To* NATASHA.] What did she hit you with? Did she stab you? . . .

KVASCHNYA. Look what a beast. They have scalded her legs with hot water.

NASTIAH. They turned the samovar over. . . .

TARTAR. It might have been an accident . . . if you are not sure you should not accuse. . . .

NATASHA. [*Half unconscious.*] Wassili . . . take me away . . . hide me. . . .

WASSILISSA. Look, my friends . . . come here. He is dead . . . they have killed him. . . .

[*All gather at the landing.* BUBNOFF *separates himself from the others and crosses to* PEPEL.]

BUBNOFF. [*Softly.*] Waska! The old man . . . is done for.

PEPEL. [*Looks at* BUBNOFF *as though he did not understand.*] Get a cab . . . she must be taken to the hospital. . . . I'll settle the bill.

BUBNOFF. Listen to what I'm saying. Somebody has finished the old man. . . .

[*The noise on the stage subsides like a fire into which water has been poured. Half aloud separate sentences are uttered.*]

Is it really true?

We have it there.

Terrible.

We had better get out, brother.

The devil!

We need clear heads now.

Get out before the police come.

[*The group becomes smaller.* BUBNOFF *and the* TARTAR *disappear.* NASTIAH *and* KVASCHNYA *stoop to* KOSTILIOFF'S *body.*]

WASSILISSA. [*Rises and cries in a triumphant tone.*] They have killed him . . . my husband! And who did it? He, there! Waska killed him. I saw it, my friends. I saw it! Now, Waska! Police! Police!

PEPEL. [*Leaves* NATASHA.] Let me alone . . . get out of the way. [*Stares at the body. To* WASSILISSA.] Now? Now you are glad? [*Kicks the body.*] Scotched at last . . . the old hound. Now you have your desire. . . . Shall I treat you in the same way . . . and twist your necks?

[*Falls on her, but is quietly caught by* SAHTIN *and* KRIVOI ZOBA. WASSILISSA *hides L. U. E.*]

SAHTIN. Come to your senses.

KRIVOI ZOBA. P-r-r-r! Where would you spring?

WASSILISSA. [*Appearing again.*] Nyah, Waska, friend of my heart! Nobody escapes his fate . . . the police! Abram . . . whistle!

MEDVIEDEFF. They have stolen my whistle, the fiends. . . .

ALYOSCHKA. Here it is.

[*He whistles,* MEDVIEDEFF *chases him.*]

SAHTIN. [*Leads* PEPEL *back to* NATASHA.] Don't worry Waska. Killed in a row . . . a trifle! Only a short sentence for that. . . .

WASSILISSA. Hold him tight. Waska murdered him. . . . I saw it!

SAHTIN. I handed him a couple myself. . . . How much does an old man need? Call me as a witness, Waska. . . .

PEPEL. I . . . do I need to justify myself? . . . But Wassilissa. . . . I'll pull her into it! She wanted it done. . . . She incited me to kill her husband . . . yes, she was the instigator. . . .

NATASHA. [*Suddenly springing up.*] Ah. . . . [*In a loud voice.*] Now it is clear. . . .

That's how it stands. Wassili! Listen, good people: it was all arranged. He and my sister, they plotted it out, they laid their plans! I see, Wassili! Before . . . you spoke with me . . . that was part of it! Good people, she is his mistress . . . you know it . . . everybody knows it. . . . They understand each other. She, she instigated the murder . . . her husband was in the way . . . for that reason . . . she beat me so. . . .

PEPEL. Natalija! What are you saying? . . . What are you saying?

SAHTIN. Foolish chatter.

WASSILISSA. She lies! All of it is lies. . . . I know of nothing. . . . Waska killed him . . . he alone!

NATASHA. They have plotted it out. . . . They shall be convicted . . . both of them. . . .

SAHTIN. Here is a game for you. . . . Now Wassili, hold fast or they will drown you.

KRIVOI ZOBA. I can't understand . . . ah . . . far away from here.

PEPEL. Natalija. . . . Speak . . . are you in earnest? Can you believe that I . . . with her. . . .

SAHTIN. For God's sake, Natasha, be sensible.

WASSILISSA. [*On the landing.*] They killed my husband . . . you high born . . . Waska Pepel, the thief killed him, Mr. Commissioner, I saw it . . . everybody saw it.

NATASHA. [*Waltzing about half senseless.*] Good people . . . my sister and Waska . . . they killed him. Mr. Policeman . . . listen to me . . . these two, my sister put him up to it . . . her lover . . . she instigated him . . . there he is, the accursed — the two did it. Arrest them . . . take them to court . . . and take me, too . . . to prison with me! For the sake of God . . . to prison. . . .

ACT IV

The same setting except that PEPEL'S *room is not to be seen, the partitions having been removed. The anvil, too, where* KLESHTSCH *sat, is gone. In the corner which was occupied by* PEPEL'S *chamber is a bunk on which the* TARTAR *lies, restlessly rolling about and groaning with pain.* KLESHTSCH *sits at the table repairing an accordeon and now and then trying the chords. At the other end of the table sit* SAHTIN, *the* BARON, *and* NASTIAH. *Before them a bottle of spirits, three bottles of beer and a great hunk of black bread. On the stove the* ACTOR, *shifting about and coughing. It is night. The stage is lit by a lamp which is in the middle of the table. Outside the wind howls.*

KLESHTSCH. Yes. . . . In the midst of the row he disappeared.

BARON. He took flight before the police, as a fog before the sun.

SAHTIN. So all sinners fly before the face of the just.

NASTIAH. He was a splendid old man . . . and you are not men . . . you are rust. . . .

BARON. [*Drinks.*] To your health, lady!

SAHTIN. An interesting patriarch . . . truly! Our Nastiah fell in love with him.

NASTIAH. True. . . . I fell in love with him. He had an eye for everything . . . he understood everything. . . .

SAHTIN. [*Laughs.*] For some people he was a Godsend . . . like mush for the toothless.

BARON. [*Laughs.*] Or a poultice for an abscess.

KLESHTSCH. He had a sympathetic heart . . . you here . . . have no sympathy.

SAHTIN. What good would it do you for me to show you pity?

KLESHTSCH. You need not sympathize . . . but at least . . . do not injure me. . . .

TARTAR. [*Gets up on his bench and moves his injured hand back and forth, as if it were a baby.*] The old man was good. . . . He had respect for the law in his heart . . . and whoever in his heart keeps the law . . . that man is good. He who does not — is lost. . . .

BARON. What law do you mean, prince?

TARTAR. As you will . . . the law . . . the law to you . . . you understand me.

BARON. Go on.

TARTAR. Encroach upon no man . . . there you have the law. . . .

SAHTIN. With us in Russia it is called, "Code for Criminal Punishment and Correction."

BARON. With another "Code for Penalties Imposed by Justices of the Peace."

TARTAR. With us it is called the Koran. . . . Your Koran is your law . . . our Koran we must carry in our hearts.

KLESHTSCH. [*Tries the accordeon.*] Don't be forever hissing, you beast. What the prince says is right. . . . We must live according to the law . . . according to the gospels. . . .

SAHTIN. Live so.

BARON. Try it.

TARTAR. Mohammed gave us the Koran . . . there you have your law, he said. Do, as is written therein. Then a time shall come when the Koran will not suffice . . . a new time with new laws . . . for every epoch has its own laws. . . .

SAHTIN. Yes, of course, our epoch gives us "Criminal Code." A durable law, not so easily worn off.

NASTIAH. [*Knocks on the table with her knuckles.*] Now I would like to know . . . exactly why I live . . . here with you? I shall go . . . anywhere . . . to the end of the earth.

BARON. Without shoes, lady?

NASTIAH. Quite naked, as far as I care! I shall crawl on all fours if you please.

BARON. That would be picturesque . . . on all fours. . . .

NASTIAH. I would do it . . . willingly . . . if I only need not have to look at your snout again . . . ah, how disgusting everything has become to me . . . my whole life . . . everybody.

SAHTIN. When you go, take the actor along with you. . . . He'll soon be going anyhow . . . he has learned that exactly half a mile from the end of the earth there is a hospital for orgisms. . . .

ACTOR. [*Sticks his head out over the edge of the stove.*] For organisms, blockhead.

SAHTIN. For organs which are poisoned with alcohol.

ACTOR. Yes, he will soon be going, very soon! You will see!

BARON. Who is this "he," sire?

ACTOR. It is I.

BARON. Merci, servant of the goddess, who . . . ah, what is she called? The goddess of the drama, of tragedy . . . what is her name?

ACTOR. The muse, blockhead, no goddess, but muse!

SAHTIN. Lachesis . . . Hera . . . Aphrodite . . . Atropos . . . the devil knows the difference between them . . . and our young adorer of the muse shall leave us . . . the old man has wound him up. . . .

BARON. The old man was a fool. . . .

ACTOR. And you are ignorant savages. You don't even know who Melpomene is. Heartless . . . you will see — he will leave you! "Interrupt not your orgy, black souls," as Beranger says. . . . He will soon find the place where there is nothing more . . . absolutely.

BARON. Where there is nothing more, sire?

ACTOR. Yes! Nothing more, "this hole here . . . it shall be my grave. . . . I die, faded and powerless." And you, why do you live? Why?

BARON. Just listen, you — Kean, or Genius and Passion. Don't bellow so.

ACTOR. Hold your snout. . . . So I will, I'll roar!

NASTIAH. [*Raises her head from the table, and waves her arms about.*] Roar forever! They may hear it.

BARON. What is the meaning of that, lady?

SAHTIN. Let her chatter, Baron . . . the devil take them both . . . may they scream . . . may they run their heads together . . . go on . . . it has a meaning. . . . Don't injure others, as the old man said . . . the pilgrim has made us all rebellious.

KLESHTSCH. He enticed us to start out . . . and knew not himself the way.

BARON. The old man was a charlatan.

NASTIAH. It is not true! You are yourself a charlatan.

BARON. Don't chatter, lady.

KLESHTSCH. He was no friend of truth, the old man. . . . He stood with all his might over against the truth . . . and after all, he is right . . . of what use to me is all truth, when I have n't a mouthful? There, look at the prince. [*Looks towards the* TARTAR.] . . . He has crushed his hand at work . . . now they say, it must come off . . . there you have the truth.

SAHTIN. [*Strikes the table with his fist.*]

Be still! Asses! Say nothing ill of the old man. [*More quietly.*] You, Baron, are the biggest fool of all . . . you have no glimmering of sense — and you keep on chattering. The old man a charlatan? What is truth? Mankind is the truth! He had seized that . . . but you have not! You are as stupid as a brick in the pavement. I understood him very well, the old man. . . . He did tell them lies, but he lied out of sympathy, as the devil knows. There are many such people who lie for brotherly sympathy's sake. . . . I know I have read about it. They lie so beautifully, with such spirit, so wonderfully. We have such soothing, such conciliating lies. . . . And there are lies which justify taking the anvil away, and the mashed hand of the toiler . . . which bring charges against the starving. . . . I . . . know these lies. . . . He who has a timid heart . . . or lives at another's table, should be lied to . . . it gives him courage . . . puts a mantle on his shoulders . . . but he who is his own master, who is independent, and lives not from the sweat of another's brow . . . what are lies to him? The lie is the religion of servant and master . . . the truth is the inheritance of free men!

BARON. Bravo! Gloriously said! Exactly my idea! You speak . . . like a man of respectability!

SAHTIN. Why should n't a scoundrel speak like a respectable man, when the respectable people talk so much like scoundrels? . . . I have forgotten much, but one thing I still keep. The old man? He had a shrewd head on his shoulders. . . . He worked on me like acid on an old, dirty coin. To his health, let him live! Pour one. . . . [NASTIAH *pours a glass of beer and hands it to* SAHTIN. *He laughs.*] The old man — he lived from within. . . . He saw everything with his own eyes. . . . I asked him once: "Grandfather, why do men really live?" . . . [*He tries in voice and manner to imitate* LUKA.] Man lives ever to give birth to strength. There live, for example, the carpenters, noisy, miserable people . . . and suddenly in their midst is a carpenter born . . . such a carpenter as the world has never seen: he is above all, no other carpenter can be compared to him. He gives a new face to the whole trade . . . his own face, so to speak . . . and with that simple impulse it has advanced twenty years . . . and so the others live . . . the locksmiths and the shoemakers, and all the rest of the working people . . . and the contractors . . . and the same is true of other classes — all to give birth to strength. Every one thinks that he for himself takes up room in the world, but it turns out that he is here for another's benefit — for some one better . . . a hundred years . . . or perhaps longer . . . if we live so long . . . for the sake of genius. [NASTIAH *stares into* SAHTIN'S *face.* KLESHTSCH *stops working on the accordeon and does nothing. The* BARON *lets his head sink and drums with his fingers on the table. The* ACTOR *sticks his head over the edge of stove, and carefully crawls down.* SAHTIN *goes on.*] All, my children, all, live only to give birth to strength. For that reason we must respect everybody. We cannot know who he is, for what purpose born, or what he may yet fulfil . . . perhaps he has been born for our good fortune . . . or great benefit . . . and especially must we respect the children . . . the little children. . . they must not suffer restraint . . . let them live their lives . . . let them be respected. [*Laughs quietly to himself. Pause.*]

BARON. [*Thoughtfully.*] For the genius. . . . Hm, yes . . . that brings to mind my own family . . . an old family . . . back to Catherine's time . . . of the nobility . . . knights . . . we came from France . . . and entered the Russian service . . . dignities accumulated on us. . . . Under Nicholas I., my grandfather, Gustav Deville . . . held a high post . . . he was rich. . . . Had hundreds of serfs . . . horses . . . a cook. . . .

NASTIAH. Don't be lying . . . it's all a fake. . . .

BARON. [*Springing up.*] Wh-at? Nyah . . . say more!

NASTIAH. It's all a fabrication.

BARON. [*Cries.*] A house in Moscow, a house in Petersburg! Coaches . . . escutcheons on the coach door.

[KLESHTSCH *takes the accordeon and goes to the side R., where he observes the scene.*]

NASTIAH. Never was such a thing.

BARON. Stop chattering! Dozens of footmen . . . I tell you!

NASTIAH. [*Tantalizing.*] None.

BARON. I'll kill you.

NASTIAH. There were no coaches.

SAHTIN. Let up, Nastenka. Don't make him so furious.

BARON. Wait . . . you wench . . . my grandfather —

NASTIAH. You had no grandfather . . . none. [SAHTIN *laughs.*]

BARON. [*Sinks back on the seat quite out of breath with anger.*] Sahtin, I tell you . . . the harlot . . . what — you laugh, too? And you. . . . Won't believe me? [*Cries out desperately, striking the table with his fists.*] Go to the devil . . . all was as I say.

NASTIAH. [*In a triumphant tone.*] Ah, ha! See how you bellow out! Now you know how a person feels when nobody believes him.

KLESHTSCH. [*Returns to table.*] I thought we should have a fight.

TARTAR. Stupid people . . . childish.

BARON. I . . . I'll not be made a fool of. . . . I have proof. . . . I have documents to satisfy. . . .

SAHTIN. Throw them in the stove. And forget your grandfather's coach. In the coach of the past nobody gets anywhere.

BARON. How can she dare . . .

NASTIAH. Hear the noise he is making . . . oh, Lord, how dare I?

SAHTIN. But you see, she dares it. Is she still worse than you? For she has certainly had in her past no coach and no grandfather . . . perhaps not even a father and mother. . . .

BARON. [*Quieting himself.*] Go to the devil. . . . You reason everything out so coldbloodedly, while I . . . I believe I have no temper. . . .

SAHTIN. Make yourself one. It is a useful thing. . . . [*Pause.*] Tell me, Nastiah, do you not go often to the hospital?

NASTIAH. What for?

SAHTIN. To Natasha?

NASTIAH. Why, have you dropped from Heaven? She has long been out . . . out and gone. . . . Nowhere is she to be found. . . .

SAHTIN. Gone? Disappeared?

KLESHTSCH. I would like to know whether Waska got Wassilissa into trouble or Wassilissa, Waska.

NASTIAH. Wassilissa? She will lie herself out. She is crafty. She will send Waska to the mines. . . .

SAHTIN. For manslaughter in a row, only imprisonment. . . .

NASTIAH. Shame. Hard labor would be better. You ought to be sentenced to hard labor too. You ought to be swept away like a pile of trash . . . into a ditch.

SAHTIN. [*Taken aback.*] What are you talking about. You are certainly mad.

BARON. I'll box your ears . . . impertinent hussy.

NASTIAH. Try it once, just touch me!

BARON. Certainly I'll try it!

SAHTIN. Let her be. Don't touch her. Don't insult any one. I always remember the old man. [*Laughs aloud.*] Don't insult mankind, not in her. . . . And if I should be insulted so that my reputation was forever gone. . . . What should I then do. . . . Forgive. No and never!

BARON. [*To* NASTIAH.] Mark you! you: I am not one of your kind . . . you . . . wench. . . .

NASTIAH. Ah, you wretch! You . . . you live with me like a maggot in an apple.

[*The men laugh understandingly.*]

KLESHTSCH. Silly goose! A fine apple you are. . . .

BARON. Shall a man get mad . . . over such . . . an idiot?

NASTIAH. You laugh? Don't sham! You don't feel like laughing. . . .

ACTOR. [*Darkly.*] Give him what is his.

NASTIAH. If I only . . . could: I would take you all and . . . [*Takes a cup from the table and smashes it on the floor.*] like that!

TARTAR. What are you breaking the dishes for . . . dunce?

BARON. [*Rising.*] No, I must teach her manners.

NASTIAH. [*Going out.*] Go to the devil.

SAHTIN. [*Calls after her.*] Let up, will you? Why do you treat her so? Will you frighten her?

NASTIAH. You wolves! It is time you were dead. [*Exit L. U. E.*]

ACTOR. [*Darkly.*] Amen!

TARTAR. Ugh, mad folks these Russian women! Hussies, unmanageable. The Tartar women are not so, they know the law.

KLESHTSCH. She must be given something that she will remember.

BARON. A low-born creature.

KLESHTSCH. [*Tries the accordeon.*] Ready, and your owner is not to be seen. . . . The boy is a lively one.

SAHTIN. Now have a drink!

KLESHTSCH. [*Drinks.*] Thanks! It is time to be turning in. . . .

SAHTIN. You'll fall in with our habits after awhile, eh?

KLESHTSCH. [*Drinks and goes to the bunk in the corner.*] If I do. . . . Everywhere, in the long run, people are to be found. . . . You do not see them at first . . . but later, when you see truer, people are to be found everywhere . . . and they are not so bad after all. . . .

[*The* TARTAR *spreads a cloth out over the bunk, sits down and prays.*]

BARON. [*To* SAHTIN, *pointing to the* TARTAR.] Just look.

SAHTIN. Let him alone. . . . He is a good fellow. . . . Don't disturb him! [*Laughs aloud.*] I am so chicken hearted today. . . . The devil may know what's coming.

BARON. You are always a little chicken hearted when you have some spirits in you . . . and rational then.

SAHTIN. When I am drunk everything pleases me. Hm — yes. . . . He prays? Very beautiful of him. A man can believe or not believe . . . that rests with him. Man is free . . . he is responsible to himself for everything: for his belief, his unbelief, his love, his wisdom. Man himself bears the cost of all, is therefore — free. . . . Man — that is the truth! But what's man? Not you, nor I, not they — no, but you, I, old Luka, Napoleon, Mohammed . . . all in one . . . is man. [*Draws in the air the outline of a man's form.*] Comprehend! It is — something huge, including all beginnings and all endings . . . all is in man, all is for man. Only man alone exists — the rest is the work of his hand and his brow. M-an! phenomenal.—How loftily it sounds, M-a-n! We must respect man . . . not compassion . . . degrade him not with pity . . . but respect. Drink we, to the health of man, baron. How splendid it is to feel yourself a man. I . . . I, a former convict, a murderer, a cheat . . . yes, when I pass along the street, the people stare at me, as though I were the most desperate of thieves . . . they get out of my way, they look after me . . . and often say to me, thief, why don't you work? . . . Work? What for? To become satiated. [*Laughs aloud.*] I have always hated those who eat themselves to death. It comes to nothing, baron, to nothing. The man is the principal thing, man stands higher than a full stomach.

[*Rises from his place.*]

BARON. [*Shakes his head.*] You are a contemplator . . . that is wise . . . that warms my heart. . . . I can't do it. [*Looks around carefully and continues in a lower tone.*] I am sometimes afraid, brother . . . do you understand? I fear what may come next.

SAHTIN. [*Goes up and down.*] Nonsense, what shall man fear?

BARON. As far back as I can remember, it always seemed to me as though a fog lay on my brow. I never knew very well just what was the matter, was never at ease. . . . I felt as if my whole life long I had only put on my clothes and taken them off again . . . why? No idea! I studied. . . . I wore the uniform of an institute for the nobility . . . but what I have learned, I don't know. . . . I married . . . put on a frock coat, then a night gown . . . selected a detestable wife — why? I don't understand. . . . I went through everything — and wore a shabby gray jacket and red-fuzzy trousers . . . but I finally went to the dogs. Hardly took any notice of it. I was employed at the Kameral Court . . . had a uniform, a cap with cockade. . . . I embezzled government money . . . pulled on the convict's jacket . . . then — what I have on now . . . and all . . . as if in a dream . . . funny, eh?

SAHTIN. Not very. . . . I find it rather foolish.

BARON. Yes. . . . I think it was foolish.

. . . But I must have been born for something . . . eh?

SAHTIN. [*Laughs.*] It is possible. . . . Man is born to give birth again to strength. [*Nods his head.*] Yes . . . fine idea.

BARON. This . . . Natasjka. . . . Simply ran out. . . . I will see where she has hidden. . . . Still, she. . . .

[*Exit L. U. E. Pause.*]

ACTOR. You Tartar! [*Pause.*] Prince! [*The* TARTAR *turns his head.*] Pray for me.

TARTAR. What do you want?

ACTOR. [*Softly.*] You must pray . . . for me. . . .

TARTAR. [*After a short silence.*] Pray for yourself.

ACTOR. [*Climbs quickly down from the stove, mounts the table, pours a glass of whiskey with trembling hand, drinks and goes out hastily, almost running, L. U. E.*] Now, I go!

SAHTIN. Heh, you Sigambrer! Where to? [*He whistles.*]

[MEDVIEDEFF *in a woman's wadded jacket, and* BUBNOFF, *enter R. U. E.* BUBNOFF *carries in one hand a bundle of pretzels, in the other a couple of smoked fish, under his arm a bottle of whiskey, and in his coat pocket a second.*]

MEDVIEDEFF. The camel is . . . a sort of ass, so to speak. Only it has no ears.

BUBNOFF. Let up! You yourself . . . are a sort of jackass.

MEDVIEDEFF. The camel has no ears at all. It hears with the nostrils.

BUBNOFF. [*To* SAHTIN.] Friend of my heart, I have searched for you in every barroom and dive. Take the bottle out, my hands are full.

SAHTIN. Put the pretzels on the table and then you will have a free hand.

BUBNOFF. That's right . . . you know the law . . . you have a sly head. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. All scoundrels have sly heads. . . . I know that . . . long. How could they catch anything without slyness? A law-abiding citizen can be stupid, but a thief must have brains in his head. But about this camel, brother, you are wrong there . . . a camel is a sort of riding deer, I say . . . it has no horns . . . and no teeth, either. . . .

BUBNOFF. Where's the whole crowd hiding? Nobody here. Say, you, come out. . . . I treat today . . . who sits there in the corner?

SAHTIN. You have already spent almost everything, scarecrow.

BUBNOFF. Of course, this time my capital was small . . . which I had scraped together. . . . Krivoi Zoba! Where is Krivoi Zoba?

KLESHTSCH. [*Steps to the table.*] He is not there.

BUBNOFF. U-u-rrr! Bull dog. Brrju, Brlyu, Brlyu, turkey cock! Don't be barking and snarling! Drink, fast, don't let your head hang. . . . I invite all, freely. I love to do that, brother! If I was a rich man, I would have a barroom in which everything would be free, by God, with music and a choir of singers. Come, drink, eat, do you hear, quicken your souls. Come to me, poor men, to my free barroom, Sahtin! Brother! I would you . . . there, take half my entire capital, there take it.

SAHTIN. Oh, give it all to me. . . .

BUBNOFF. All? My whole capital? Do you want it? . . . There! A ruble . . . another . . . twenty . . . a couple of fivers . . . a pair of two copec pieces . . . that is all!

SAHTIN. Lovely . . . I'll keep it safely. . . . I'll win my money back with it.

MEDVIEDEFF. I am a witness . . . you have given him the money in trust . . . how much was it, though?

BUBNOFF. You? You are — a camel. . . . We need no witnesses.

ALYOSCHKA. [*Enters L. U. E. with bare feet.*] Children! I have gotten my feet wet!

BUBNOFF. Come — get your gullet wet . . . to balance matters. You're a lovely boy, you sing and make music . . . very clever of you! But — drink . . . not too much! Guzzling is very injurious, brother . . . very injurious. . . .

ALYOSCHKA. I see that in you . . . you only look like a man after you have gotten drunk. Kleshtsch! Is my accordeon mended? [*Sings and dances with it.*]

If I were not such a tasty boy,
So lively, fresh and neat,
Then Madam Godfather would
Never again call me sweet.
Frozen stiff, children. It is cold.

MEDVIEDEFF. Hm — and if I may be bold enough to ask: Who is Madam Godfather?

BUBNOFF. You . . . are not interested in that! You have nothing to ask here now. You are no policeman any more . . . that's a fact. Neither police nor uncle. . . .

ALYOSCHKA. But simply, auntie's husband!

BUBNOFF. Of your nieces, one sits in prison, the other is dying. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Expands his chest.*] That is not true: She is not dying. She has simply gone away! [SAHTIN *laughs aloud.*]

BUBNOFF. Quite true, brother! A man without nieces — is no uncle!

ALYOSCHKA. Your excellency, the pensioned drum-major of the belly brigade.

Nary a single cent have I,
While Madam Godfather has money,
But still I'm nice, I'm very very nice,
I'm as nice and as sweet as honey.
Brr, it is cold.

[KRIVOI ZOBA *enters, then, until the end of the act, couples, men and women, enter, undress themselves, stretch out on the bunks and grumble to themselves.*]

KRIVOI ZOBA. Why did you run away, Bubnoff?

BUBNOFF. Come here and sit down. Let's sing something, brother! My favorite hymn, eh?

TARTAR. It is night now, time for sleeping. Sing during the day.

SAHTIN. Let them sing, prince, come over here.

TARTAR. Let them sing — and then a row. . . . You sing and they fight.

BUBNOFF. [*Going to him.*] What's the matter with your hand, prince? Has somebody cut it off?

TARTAR. Why cut it off? Let us wait. . . . Perhaps it will not be necessary to cut it off . . . a hand is not made of iron . . . cutting off is an easy thing to do. . . .

KRIVOI ZOBA. It is a bad job, Hassanka! What, are you without a hand? In our business they only look at the hands and the back. . . . A man without a hand is no man at all! Might as well be dead. Come, drink a glass with us.

KVASCHNYA. [*Enters L. U. E.*] Ah, my dear tenants. Biting cold outside, slush . . . and raw. . . . Is my policeman there? Heh, there, Commissioner!

MEDVIEDEFF. Here I am.

KVASCHNYA. You have my jacket on again? What is the matter with you? You have been having a bit, eh? That don't go.

MEDVIEDEFF. Bubnoff . . . has a birthday . . . and it is so cold, such slush. . . .

KVASCHNYA. I'll teach you . . . such slush. . . . But don't forget the rules of this household . . . go to bed. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Exit R. to kitchen.*] To bed! I can. . . . I will . . . it is time. [*Exit.*]

SAHTIN. Why are you . . . so strict with him?

KVASCHNYA. There is nothing else to do, dear friend. A man like that must be closely reined. I did not marry him for fun. He is military, I thought . . . and you are a dangerous lot. . . . I, a woman, would be no match for you . . . now he's beginning to souse — no, my boy, that don't go.

SAHTIN. You made a bad selection in your assistant. . . .

KVASCHNYA. No, wait — he is all right . . . you will not get me . . . and if you did, the honeymoon would not last over a week . . . you'd gamble the clothes off my back.

SAHTIN. [*Laughs.*] That's no lie, I would lose you. . . .

KVASCHNYA. So, then. Alyoschka.

ALYOSCHKA. Here he is. . . .

KVASCHNYA. Tell me, what gossip have you been spreading about me?

ALYOSCHKA. I? Everything! I tell everything that can honestly be told. What a woman! say I. Simply an astonishing woman. Flesh, fat, bones, over three hundred weight, and brains, not half a grain.

KVASCHNYA. Nyah, you lie, my young man, I have quantities of brain. . . . No — why do you tell folks that I beat my policeman?

ALYOSCHKA. I thought, because you

tore his hair out . . . that is as good as a beating.

KVASCHNYA. [*Laughs.*] You are a fool! Why carry such dirt out of the house? . . . that has grieved him sorely . . . he has taken to drink from worry over your gossip. . . .

ALYOSCHKA. Listen: It is therefore true, what the proverb says: that the hen has a throat for liquor.

[SAHTIN *and* KLESHTSCH *laugh.*]

KVASCHNYA. But you are witty: and tell me, what sort of animal you are, Alyoschka?

ALYOSCHKA. I am a fellow who fits snugly into the world. The finest of the finest sort! A regular jack of all trades. Where my eye turns, there my heart follows.

BUBNOFF. [*On the* TARTAR'S *bunk.*] Come, we will not let you sleep. Today we'll sing . . . the whole night, eh, Krivoi Zoba?

KRIVOI ZOBA. May we?

ALYOSCHKA. I'll play for you. . . .

SAHTIN. And we will hear it.

TARTAR. [*Grunting.*] Nyah, old satan, Bubna . . . pour me a glass: "We'll revel, we'll drink until death gives the wink."

BUBNOFF. Pour him one, Sahtin! Krivoi Zoba, sit down! Ah, brothers! How little a man needs! I, for example, I've only had a couple of swallows . . . and walk tangled footed. Krivoi Zoba, strike up . . . my favorite song. I will sing and weep.

KRIVOI ZOBA. [*Sings.*] "Though still the sun goes up and down. . . . "

BUBNOFF. [*Falls in.*] "No gleam can pierce to me in here."

[*The door is jerked open.*]

BARON. [*On the platform, crying.*] Heh, there . . . you! Come quick . . . come out! In the yard . . . there . . . the actor . . . has hanged himself!

[*Silence, all stare at the* BARON. *Behind him appears* NASTIAH, *who with staring eyes goes to the table.*]

SAHTIN. [*Softly.*] He must spoil our song . . . the fool.

CURTAIN

THE TRAGEDY OF LOVE

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

By GUNNAR HEIBERG

Authorized translation from the Norwegian by EDWIN BJÖRKMAN

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PERSONS

KAREN
ERLING KRUSE, *a forester*
HARTVIG HADELN
AN OLD WOMAN
A PEASANT BOY
TRAIN PASSENGERS
A PEASANT WOMAN AND HER LITTLE SON
JOHANNES
A MAID

THE TRAGEDY OF LOVE

THE FIRST ACT

The inside of a hut used by the women herding cattle on the mountain pastures during the summer. A window in the rear wall. Under the window, a bench fastened to the wall. On the right of the window, a door. There is a fire in the open fireplace, which stands near the foreground on the left. Logs and a chopping block near the fireplace. A bedstead along the same wall, further back. A table and some chairs near the fireplace. Wooden shelves along the walls, on which are placed saucers, bowls of different sizes, and pans of copper. Wooden spoons are stuck into the openings between the shelf boards. A dark autumn evening. It is raining, and a high wind is blowing. The wind increases in force as the action progresses. A solitary candle is burning on the table. Now and then the branches of a small birch tree are heard rapping at the window. An old woman is going about the room, putting things in order. ERLING KRUSE *has just begun to unpack a knapsack. Suddenly he grabs a wet raincoat and puts it on.*

ERLING. I heard somebody.

[*He rushes out.*]

OLD WOMAN. It was nothing but the birch at the window.

[*She fixes a couple of wooden torches in their holders on the wall.*]

ERLING. [*Returning.*] What rotten weather!

OLD WOMAN. Good weather for trolls to be abroad.

ERLING. Black above and black below.

OLD WOMAN. And everything covered by snow this morning.

ERLING. It is bad for the woods, too.

OLD WOMAN. Now everything is ready. I am sleeping in the shed, if you should want anything. . . .

ERLING. Thanks, Groo. Good-night.

[*The old woman leaves.* ERLING *flings the raincoat into a corner. Then he changes his mind. Picks up the coat and arranges it neatly to be dried. Produces a bottle of Rhine wine and some food. Suddenly he claps his hands over his head.*]

ERLING. [*With a radiant smile.*] Now she *must* come.

[*The door is opened from the outside.* KAREN *enters, wrapped from head to foot in a cloak.* ERLING *runs up to her. She shrinks a little from him.*]

KAREN. I am cold.

ERLING. I'll stoke!

[*He piles a lot of wood on the fire*

KAREN *stands still as before.*]

ERLING. [*Turning toward her, brightly.*] I knew you would come.

KAREN. Indeed?

ERLING. I could feel it.

KAREN. How could you know?

ERLING. You have come.

KAREN. [*Almost with irritation.*] But not in the manner you mean. I have come because you like me. Not because I like you. Is n't that possible? Can you imagine such a thing?

ERLING. You have come.

KAREN. It seemed that I had to keep our agreement. It was to come here after a year, on the anniversary — unless — if not — if there had been no change in the meantime.

ERLING. If you liked me as much as you did a year ago — those were the words. Have *you* been longing dreadfully?

KAREN. Less and less as the days went by.

ERLING. Until the day you started.

KAREN. [*Forgetting herself.*] I did start all of a sudden. [*After a brief pause.*] That is nothing to smile at.

ERLING. I did n't smile. I only laughed. Come and sit here by the fireplace.

KAREN. [*Remaining as before.*] What a job to get here!

ERLING. How long did it take you from the last farmstead?

KAREN. What time is it now?

ERLING. Nine.

KAREN. Then it took me five hours.

ERLING. Five hours on horseback in such a weather . . . but . . . you are crying!

KAREN. I was scared on the way up here. It was so cold and dark. Last year the weather was fine, and we were a big party.

ERLING. This year the weather is bad, and there are only two of us. The only two people in the world.

[*He starts to put his arm about her waist.*]

KAREN. [*Quietly.*] Don't! [*Looking at him.*] It is against our agreement.

ERLING. [*With a smile.*] Is it?

KAREN. You ought to know, who have kept it so well otherwise.

ERLING. By not writing a single line during a whole year, you mean?

KAREN. Yes.

ERLING. Are you mad because I did n't?

KAREN. I did n't write either.

[*The boy in charge of the horses appears in the doorway.*]

ERLING. I am coming. [*To* KAREN.] I'll tell him that he can go home.

[*He goes out after the boy.* KAREN *takes a step after him as if to stop him. Checks herself, but shows signs of uneasiness.*]

ERLING. [*Returning.*] How bright it is in here! Did you light up?

KAREN. [*Smiling.*] No, I could n't. My hands are too stiff.

ERLING. Now you must get warm. [*Takes off her cloak.*] The sun rising out of the fog!

KAREN. [*Seating herself by the fireplace.*] It is not so easy, you know, for a young lady of the upper class to go to a strange gentleman in this way — all by herself — in the midst of the night.

[ERLING *hands her a glass of wine, which she drinks.*]

KAREN. Especially when she lives with her two sisters and a brother in government service — ugh!

ERLING. [*Imitating.*] Ugh!

KAREN. To get away, she had to stuff her sisters and the government official full of lies — all in order to get up on this bare mountain. [*Breaking into sudden laughter.*] It's a dreadful story, is n't it?

ERLING. [*With a smile.*] Very.

KAREN. Particularly as the young lady of twenty-five meant to stay in her own chimney corner for the rest of her life — where she had begun to find peace and quiet.

ERLING. From a stormy life.

KAREN. No, to escape it.

ERLING. [*Smilingly and tenderly.*] In my company?

KAREN. [*Turning to* ERLING.] Not exactly. I am not afraid of you. I am not afraid of going back again, if necessary. Nor am I afraid of sending you back, if that should prove necessary — not a bit!

ERLING. No — lots of courage!

KAREN. Lots, but not enough. I was a little scared. *Was*, I said. When, all at once, I found myself here. Because the one thing I had made up my mind about, was not to be caught by surprise. So you can't wonder that I was a little upset when I first got here.

ERLING. I have seen no signs of your being upset.

KAREN. Why are you so frightfully sure of yourself — so sure of everything — much more than last year?

ERLING. [*Softly and with great feeling.*] Because I love you a thousand times more this year.

KAREN. Now the sun is hungry.

ERLING. [*Pointing to the table.*] Would the sun like to start with a sardine?

[*Both laugh. They seat themselves at the table and eat a while without speaking.*]

KAREN. Of course, I have often thought that it might be rather pleasant, when dressed in my best, to walk into a concert hall with a very distinguished looking gentleman. . . .

ERLING. Or into a theatre, just before

the curtain is about to rise, so that every one in the same row must get up. . . .

KAREN. Exactly — school!

ERLING. School!

[They remain silent again for a while.]

KAREN. Do you know — it seems to me as if everybody in love — or said to be in love — had an awful time of it. While all the rest look as if they were getting along splendidly.

ERLING. What a sad impression of life! Where did you get it?

KAREN. Where I got it? Oh, drifting along without any ties, one sees a little, and hears a little, and feels a little — and suddenly there is something that frightens, and one does n't even know what it is. I, for instance, have a fixed idea of having a fixed idea, but I don't know what it is. . . . *[Laughing.]* Lord, how wise you look just now! *[Again there is silence for a while.]*

ERLING. I don't think I have ever had a better time than this year.

KAREN. What did you do all the time?

ERLING. I longed for you.

KAREN. But then you were miserable?

ERLING. No, it was splendid.

KAREN. Do you think it splendid to long all the time?

ERLING. Yes, when it is for you, Karen.

KAREN. I think it is the worst thing in the world. I can't bear to long for anything. It makes me mad. But bless your soul, what else did you do?

ERLING. Went about feeling happy.

KAREN. Nothing else?

ERLING. Oh, I worked. *[Rising.]* It seemed as if my work was lifted up — high, high. It seemed to grow bigger and more beautiful because I was thinking of you. I saw nothing but your face. I saw it when I pruned and grafted. I saw it when I sowed and planted. The whole forest was full of your charming face, with its bright, child-like eyes.

[He takes her by the hand and raises her from the chair, pressing her close to himself. KAREN *stands for a moment as if robbed of her will; then she walks over to the other side of the hut and sits down there.]*

ERLING. *[Places himself behind her chair; unable to find words for a while; at last he says in a very low voice.]* I love those two sisters of yours, and even the government official.

KAREN. *[Holding up her hand to him.]* You speak so prettily to me. *[Then she rises abruptly, walks away a few steps, but turns back toward him; speaks pleadingly.]* Oh, let me go! Or go away yourself.

ERLING. *[After a pause; with quiet intensity.]* Don't you like me, Karen?

KAREN. *[Sits down as if reassured by his voice.]* But . . . but . . .

ERLING. What?

KAREN. I thought everything would be so different.

ERLING. You thought you would feel much happier?

KAREN. Not happier.

ERLING. More solemn, perhaps. More overwhelmed.

KAREN. *[With a hesitant smile.]* I thought there would be a glitter as of gold about everything.

ERLING. *[Smiling back at her.]* And now you feel disappointed?

KAREN. *[More cheerfully and speaking faster.]* First of all, I felt quite sure that, when I came in here from that dreadful darkness outside, you would be waiting for me on your knees.

ERLING. Well, did n't I?

KAREN. *[Gathering courage.]* And if we loved each other, how could a single room hold us? The walls would burst. It would turn the house upside down at least.

ERLING. *[Coming close to her, deeply stirred.]* How beautiful! You make me see things so much larger. I feel now what a great responsibility I have. I did n't know — I did n't know how much I loved you. I did n't know until now what a marvellous woman you are — so sure, so proud, and your head so high. . . . *[Passionately.]* Now I love. . . . Now I love for the first time. . . . Once more I love for the first time.

KAREN. *[Who has closed her eyes; softly, slowly.]* And then it is so delightful . . .

ERLING. A little louder!

KAREN. So intoxicatingly delightful to be asked . . .

ERLING. [*Taking her hand.*] Shall we begin to-morrow?

KAREN. To-morrow?

ERLING. Yes, to-morrow.

KAREN. Begin what?

ERLING. To subjugate the earth. To build the forest. We must have new forests in this country: useful trees, and trees that please the eye, and stately shade trees leading up to happy homes, and fruit trees, and ornamental trees, and in the midst of all those trees, Karen, our home — our forest home.

KAREN. [*Softly.*] But first of all we must see the world.

ERLING. Travel? Yes, of course. First of all a long tour abroad. Oh, you can make me do whatever you will.

KAREN. Can I?

ERLING. Anything. The forest itself, and the hunt — I could give up everything, if you wished it.

KAREN. Would you?

[*There is a knock at the door. The door opens. One hears that the wind has increased and the storm grown worse.* HARTVIG HADELN *enters. His eyes move slowly and heavily, but there is wisdom in their glance. His voice is very subdued, and so are his movements. His head generally droops a little. He is dressed in a thin overcoat that is not buttoned. He wears a small soft hat, which he does not take off at once, and he carries a small handbag. He is wet through and through.*]

HADELN. [*Stopping at the door and shading his eyes with one hand.*] How bright it is in here! [*After a while.*] I have lost my way in the mountains.

ERLING. Come up to the fire and get dried.

HADELN. [*Looking around.*] This must be the home pasture of Gudbrand Kvenne.

ERLING. So it is.

HADELN. But all this light and festivity. . . . [*His face brightens up.*] And such bright and happy people! [*A little embarrassed when he gets no reply.*] It was all blackness out there.

ERLING. Come up to the fire, please, and have a glass of wine.

[*He pours out a glass of wine.*]

HADELN. [*Staring at* KAREN *all the time.*] If you permit?

KAREN. [*Politely, but rather curtly.*] You are welcome.

HADELN. [*Standing as before.*] I certainly lost my bearings pretty badly — and yet I have been here so many times. I tramp the whole year almost.

[*Seats himself on the bench under the window.*]

ERLING. Please come over to the fire. You are soaking wet.

[KAREN *goes up to* ERLING *and puts her arm through his. All remain silent for a few moments.*]

HADELN. I don't mind losing my way here at home, where I know the language.

KAREN. [*Laughing involuntarily.*] How funny!

HADELN. All it means, I suppose, is that we egoists find it rather hard to learn foreign languages. [*After a pause.*] I see the place is occupied. [*New general pause.*]

KAREN. There is only this one room. But perhaps in the cowshed . . .

[*She breaks off abruptly and turns away from the two men.*]

ERLING. [*Noticing her embarrassment; in a low voice.*] My love! [*Turning to* HADELN *again.*] This glass is for you, you know.

HADELN. [*Rising unexpectedly and taking off his hat.*] My name is Hartvig Hadeln.

KAREN. [*Instinctively.*] He who . . .

HADELN. [*Calmly and earnestly.*] Who writes such fine poems — yes.

ERLING. [*Handing him the glass.*] My name is Erling Kruse, forester.

HADELN. And your wife?

KAREN. Just married.

[*She puts her arm about* ERLING'S *neck, and he draws her close to himself. For a moment they stand thus, close together.* HADELN *stares at them. His features stiffen into a painful, almost hard expression.*]

HADELN. [*Raising his glass and speaking very quietly.*] Here is to a happy outcome of the battle of love.

KAREN. [*Turning her head toward him.*] The battle of love?

HADELN. The battle for superiority.

KAREN. [*With her arm still about* ERLING'S *neck.*] There can be no battle when both love each other.

HADELN. Yes, always. And he who loves most is always the loser, for he loses the loved one.

[KAREN *looks at him questioningly and with the suggestion of a smile.*]

HADELN. [*Smiling back.*] You ought to know that the more one loves, the more dwindles the love of the other.

KAREN. Why don't you defend me, Erling?

ERLING. [*Who has been looking at* KAREN *all the time without listening.*] Pardon me, Mr. Hadeln, but I did n't catch what you said.

HADELN. [*Curtly.*] I merely said that he who is happy in his love does not love. He merely vegetates.

KAREN. So it is impossible to love and be happy?

HADELN. [*Smiling.*] I don't think love pays any attention to happiness. If it is there — good and well. If it is not — then it is also good and well. But happiness has no real connection with the matter.

KAREN. [*More eagerly.*] But when two people love each other, they must be happy.

HADELN. Two people never love each other. [KAREN *and* ERLING *laugh.*]

HADELN. Never at the same time.

KAREN. [*Struck by his words.*] Never at the same time?

HADELN. [*Quickly, staring at her.*] *You* should know that.

KAREN. [*Gazes at him a little frightened; then she looks at* ERLING, *puts her arm about his neck and speaks very fast and ardently.*] But it comes. It comes. Not at once, perhaps. But the moment comes when both love each other with the same intensity.

HADELN. [*Firmly.*] Never. Not for a second. When it looks that way, the scales are merely hesitating. [*Changing to banter once more.*] The only consolation left for us poor people is that it only has a short time to live anyhow.

ERLING. [*Smiling.*] Love?

KAREN. Is love about to die, poor thing?

HADELN. Yes, the love we now have must soon die.

ERLING. What day, if you please?

HADELN. The day we become truthful to our children. The day we teach them to appear like ourselves. In our laps and on the school bench.

KAREN. What are we to teach them?

HADELN. Only one little thing: that it is natural for our bodies to come together.

ERLING. Oh, that kind of love!

KAREN. [*To* ERLING.] Hush. . . .

HADELN. [*Still smiling, and addressing himself chiefly to* KAREN.] The soul is a later invention, madam. The feeling of shame springs from the transports of the body. That feeling produces secrecy. And from the secrecy comes what we call the soul of love. But when we divulge the secret, then there is not much left of the soul. And that's the way love dies, poor thing — sacred love, man's most beautiful dream, the great poem of life, the sublime stupidity, the divine madness. Pooh — gone, as soon as the secrecy vamosed!

KAREN. [*Impulsively.*] Oh, there is always some one you prefer, some one you love. You never cease to *choose.*

HADELN. [*Firmly.*] Then you will begin to choose. [*With a wave of his hand.*] Now everything is blind and accidental.

KAREN. [*Slightly irritated.*] How cocksure you are!

HADELN. [*Quietly once more, and smiling.*] Why should I not be cocksure — I who have written to the Emperor of Germany and given him good advice. [*When the others stare at him.*] Yes, this man here with the wet hat. With my own hands. And now I am waiting for an answer. [*He clucks rather than laughs.*] But my appeal has led to no results so far. And I have had no answer — perhaps because I have no standing address. I am on the go, you know — day and night, all the year around. [*Quite seriously again.*] Good-night, and thanks!

ERLING. But the weather is horrible. . . .

KAREN. [*Who has stood pensive for a while.*] So that's the way you make poetry — for poetry it was, I suppose, all this talk?

HADELN. Yes.

KAREN. [*With some hesitation.*] Have you tried it yourself?

HADELN. [*Smiling.*] No, if I had, I could not speak with such certainty.

KAREN. [*With a slight smile.*] Nothing but words, then?

HADELN. Nothing but words. But in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, you know. And the Word was God. [*After a while.*] And words may kill, too.

KAREN. Too . . . ?

HADELN. Yes, love . . . I mean — it happens also that love kills — if it is of extra fine quality. But I must get away from here. [*With a near-smile.*] I ought really to put human life in order — and rearrange the conditions of the world a little — before I go to bed. And I do it so much better in the dark than here in the light among real people. Good-bye.

[*He disappears quietly. The storm is heard raging outside.* KAREN *goes quickly to the door and tries to lock it, but cannot.*]

ERLING. Want me to help?

[*Goes up to her and locks the door as he puts his left arm about her waist.* KAREN *goes slowly to the fireplace and sits down with her feet close to the fire.* ERLING *follows her and stands beside her; begins to smile.* KAREN *looks inquiringly at him.*]

ERLING. Patent leather pumps. You rode up the mountainside in patent leather pumps. In this kind of weather.

KAREN. [*Holding out her hand to him.*] I was afraid of not catching the train.

ERLING. [*Draws her close to himself.*] Oh, Karen — Karen.

KAREN. [*Softly.*] Of course, you understand, there was nothing I wished more than to grow fond of you.

ERLING. [*Enraptured.*] Your eyes close! [*Lets her go a moment; clapping his hands together and speaking with intense feeling.*] I think we shall bring joy with us wherever we appear in the world — we two.

KAREN. [*Leaning close to him.*] You and I, Erling! Just we two!

CURTAIN

THE SECOND ACT

The following year — in the spring. The waiting room of a small railway station in southern Germany. A mountain region. The station is supposed to lie between two railway lines, with a platform on either side. There are doors in both side walls and windows in the background. A lot of baggage is piled on a bench.

[ERLING *and* KAREN *come running in. Just as they enter, the train whistle is heard.*]

ERLING. There goes the train.

KAREN. [*Simultaneously.*] There goes the train.

[*They throw themselves laughingly on a bench some distance away from each other.*]

KAREN. It was your fault, because you insisted on walking.

ERLING. No, it was yours because you would n't start in time.

KAREN. It was you who must say good-bye to every one of the dogs.

ERLING. No, it was you who could n't decide which hat to put on.

[*Both laugh again.*]

ERLING. Now we have to wait exactly one hour and thirty-seven minutes.

KAREN. Why do you read the train table all the time when you know it by heart? I think if we had a collision, you would save that table first of all.

ERLING. No, first my herbarium, then you, and last the table. [*Looking out through the window.*] How beautiful it is with all those brooks coming down the mountainside. Just as in Norway. To-day week I shall be in the midst of my own forest — hooray!

KAREN. Yes, that will be fun, too. . . .

ERLING. Poor Henriksen — he wanted us so badly to stay abroad, so that he could remain in charge all summer.

KAREN. That's out of the question, Mr. Henriksen.

ERLING. Did you see that cross-section? Look here. [*He brings out a letter.*] Henriksen has drawn a cross-section of a pine I tapped last year. Look here. [*Pointing with his pencil.*] After the first twenty years the

marrow of the tree was no thicker than that. But during the year we have been away, after the swamp was drained, the tree has grown — in one year alone — just as much as it did during the first twenty years. What do you think of that?

KAREN. It is nothing compared with me. In the one year I have been with you, my marrow has grown just as much as it did during twenty-five years before I came under rational treatment.

ERLING. "Rational treatment" is good. Yes, there you see. And you are a tree that craves a lot of light like the pine. It flourishes — well?

KAREN. It does not flourish in sandy soil.

ERLING. Oh! That's just what it does — in sandy soil, with plenty of sun. But I am a shade tree like the spruce, craving deep, damp soil. That means, we need different kinds of soil. In other words, we don't fit together.

KAREN. [*About his neck.*] Oh, you! [*Quietly.*] I grow quite solemn when I consider what a man you are.

ERLING. [*With a twinkle in his eye.*] Not merely solemn, I hope.

KAREN. [*Gayly again.*] I should say not.

ERLING. Because I am not entirely like a spruce, I hope.

[KAREN *takes a few dance steps away from him; when he continues to smile at her, she stops and looks at him with a half-smile expressive of some uncertainty.*]

ERLING. [*Approaching her slowly.*] What?

KAREN. [*Imitating him.*] What?

ERLING. [*Nodding affirmatively.*] Yes.

KAREN. I think you're crazy — the way you talk. In the middle of the day.

ERLING. [*Pressing her close to himself; after a while.*] It will be better when I get to work again.

KAREN. [*Smiling; softly.*] Better?

ERLING. This state of intoxication cannot last all life.

KAREN. Why not?

ERLING. Speaking seriously — I long frightfully to get back into the forest and take hold again. You understand that, don't you?

KAREN. Yes, indeed. And you can be sure I'll help you.

ERLING. I am not afraid of saying, Karen, that the whole world lies before us like a dream of light and happiness.

KAREN. [*Fervently.*] Marvellously beautiful.

ERLING. This tour has been like a magnificent overture to our whole future.

KAREN. [*Tenderly.*] That's what I meant to say when you interrupted me. I *do* grow solemn when I begin to think. Because I think of you. And what you have been to me. And then I grow thankful. A stupid little beast, that's what I was — who thought I could keep myself from loving you. You have turned me into a full-grown human being — me who was so stunted and crooked and tied up. It is fine to draw a full breath, I can tell you. And it is fine to be young again. Formerly it was as if all that happened in the world, and all the people in it, had no more reality than shadows drifting by indifferently, without my having anything to do with them. And now — now — [*She is searching unsuccessfully for words; at last.*] Now I seem often to understand things and people better than you — because half the time you stand there like a booby, without any understanding at all.

ERLING. Don't you think I have noticed it? It happens so many times that I don't understand until long afterwards.

KAREN. Exactly.

ERLING. You conceited thing!

KAREN. Your own fault. Everything is your fault: that I radiate happiness and joy and kindness and sunlight and charm and bewitching beauty and perennial ravishment. Behold. . . . What a figure! What eyes! What a smile! What a . . .

ERLING. [*Suddenly.*] I have left our field glasses behind. You did n't pack them?

KAREN. No. Let us fly back to the hotel and get them.

ERLING. No, you stay here — [*pointing*] — and keep an eye on the baggage. I'll go alone. There is plenty of time.

[*Leaves quickly. A train is about due. A few passengers arrive. A*

peasant woman with a little boy appears on one of the platforms. The boy is crying. The woman shakes him and scolds him. KAREN *goes over to the woman and talks to her. One can see that the woman is explaining something to* KAREN, *who sits down with her and the boy.* HARTVIG HADELN *comes in after a while. He carries a small handbag and a stick. He is covered with dust and looks as if he were tired out by a long walk. On catching sight of* KAREN, *he stops abruptly, apparently unable at first to make up his mind. Then he starts past her to the platform outside as if he had not seen her.* KAREN *is seen to recognize him. After a moment's hesitation, she goes after him.*]

KAREN. How are you, Mr. Hadeln?

HADELN. [*Turning around with a jerky movement.*] I come from Galicia.

KAREN. On foot?

HADELN. Yes. But I'll take the train across the mountains. There are times when it is cheaper to travel by train than to walk.

KAREN. It looked as if you did n't care to recognize me.

HADELN. [*Involuntarily.*] Yes.

KAREN. [*Uncertain how to take it.*] Indeed . . . ?

[*They stand a few moments without talking.*]

KAREN. I cannot help laughing. I was just talking to that woman on the bench over there. She was slapping her boy for mere love of him.

[HADELN *stands immovable, looking down at the floor, without a sign of interest.*]

KAREN. You know that he who loveth his son . . . [HADELN *remains as before.*]

KAREN. But that was because the boy wanted to get down on those glistening rails. Each time the mother turned away, he jumped down. She had brought him back three times, she said. [*She looks around as if hoping to catch sight of* ERLING.] Yes. . . . [*Looking at the woman again.*] But now the storm is stilled. Look at her.

[*The woman can be seen playing with the boy and kissing him.*]

HADELN. [*In his usual subdued voice.*] That night on the mountain, when I came in from the darkness, it was as if a bright blue sky of happiness and youth had spanned its vault above the heads of yourself and him — your husband.

KAREN. Yes.

HADELN. And I sent a black cloud across that sky.

KAREN. No — not at all. A black cloud? We did n't notice anything. We thought it such fun to listen to you.

HADELN. I could not help doing it.

KAREN. How can you talk like that? We noticed nothing at all. The only thing was — it seemed so unreasonable to let you go out into that frightful pouring rain.

HADELN. I promised myself that I should try to explain if I ever met you.

KAREN. [*Smiling.*] But when you met me, you would n't even recognize me.

HADELN. It seemed so difficult when the time came to do it.

KAREN. You are no man of action.

HADELN. No.

KAREN. You who write so bravely — for now, you know, I have read your poems.

HADELN. I fear it is only in my poems I am brave and splendid.

KAREN. Do you go about like this all the time, all by yourself? Tell me why you do it.

HADELN. And then I did n't know whether it was worth the trouble, as I had no idea who you were.

KAREN. If I deserved that much trouble, you mean.

HADELN. Yes. Or if I merely wished to enjoy the sense of humiliating myself before you. And as I already have made a laughing-stock of myself once to-day, I thought it might be enough.

[KAREN *looks at him uncomprehendingly.*]

HADELN. Yes. An hour ago I stood on that ridge up there. Then I heard laughter.

KAREN. Who laughed?

HADELN. I did.

KAREN. [*Timidly, almost frightened.*] But — why did you laugh?

HADELN. What else can you do when the sun is rising and you don't know which suit to put on for the day — which one of your souls. [*After a pause.*] I could n't decide whether to kiss the foot-soles of humanity, or refuse entirely to honor the earth with my isolated and interesting majesty. The weather was so fine, and the sun shone so nicely, and the mountains looked so friendly, that there was much to say for both those ways of conducting my life. And when I had stood talking loudly to myself about all this for a while — then came that laughter.

KAREN. [*After a pause; abruptly.*] You should fall in love.

HADELN. [*After a quick glance at her.*] With a lady?

KAREN. Yes — what else could there be?

HADELN. Why not just as well fall in love with a great man, or an old wardrobe, or the entire united humanity and animality, or just a little white lamb bearing the sin of all the world? The result would be the same as in the case of a lady. Either you kneel in the shadow, or your naked ego wallows in the sunlight.

KAREN. [*Pondering his words; after a while.*] Yes — but that would be nice for you?

HADELN. But that is just what I cannot do.

KAREN. Why can't you?

HADELN. [*Strongly stirred.*] Because there is not a thing I *care* for.

KAREN. Don't you care for anything?

HADELN. No, I don't care for anything. [*After a pause.*] That is to say, there is nothing for which I care more than for anything else. And so everything seems equally stupid. [*After a new pause.*] But that night on the mountain. . . .

KAREN. [*Eagerly.*] My wedding night.

HADELN. [*Gives her a flash-like glance; then.*] I came out of the darkness, and there you stood: so gloriously triumphant, so proud, so youthfully strong, so joyfully alive — and, oh, so radiantly confident. So confident!

KAREN. [*Smiling.*] And then you cared for something?

HADELN. Yes.

KAREN. For my confidence?

HADELN. Yes.

KAREN. And it made you happy?

HADELN. No, it made me angry.

KAREN. [*Apparently shocked.*] Angry? But why?

HADELN. Because I could do nothing to you.

KAREN. But you did me no harm.

HADELN. I tried.

KAREN. How?

HADELN. [*With less force.*] By using my only weapon. My only miserable, poisoned weapon. My words. I tried to shake your confidence.

KAREN. [*With suppressed pleasure.*] And you thought I was so very confident?

HADELN. [*Harshly.*] You literally sparkled with it.

KAREN. [*As before.*] I was not confident, but you made me.

HADELN. I?

KAREN. Do you know when Erling and I agreed to marry?

HADELN. That very night, perhaps.

KAREN. Yes, but *when* . . .

HADELN. Just before I came. . . . As I appeared in the doorway, perhaps. . . .

KAREN. After you came.

HADELN. After I came?

KAREN. While you were there. It was your presence, your words — maybe the very fact that you wished to disturb my confidence — of which I knew nothing at the time, of course — all this — it crystallized me. It made me confident. It caused me to make up my mind, to choose — to choose my own happiness. My miraculous happiness. It is almost your fault, Mr. Hadeln, that I now feel a happiness which I think without equal in all the world. Yes, you should be glad, indeed.

[HADELN *goes toward the background to pick up his handbag.*]

KAREN. [*As if suddenly guessing the truth; in a subdued tone, long drawn out; to herself.*] O-o-oh. . . .

HADELN. [*Coming forward again; gently.*] Apparently I cannot reach people with malice even. . . .

KAREN. [*With deep feeling.*] But you have reached me to-day, Mr. Hadeln. I

think you have been so nice and considerate to me. I feel so proud because you have confided in me. [*Tenderly.*] Do be a little happy, Mr. Hadeln . . . . You *must* feel happy because you have helped to make two other people happy. I wish I could be kind to you in return. You have such sad eyes. And I feel so rich — so rich beyond all bounds. And it is only right to say so, when it is so, Mr. Hadeln — don't you think?

HADELN. [*Quietly, but deeply touched.*] Yes. Yes.

KAREN. [*Slowly, almost as if speaking only to herself.*] Yes, I am happy. [*Abruptly.*] Because, you see, it is at the same time.

[HADELN *stares at her.*]

KAREN. Which you declared to be impossible.

HADELN. [*Slightly embarrassed.*] It does make one a little queer to be so much alone.

KAREN. [*Without listening to him.*] But Erling is the greatest man in the world.

[HADELN *looks at her with a slight smile.*]

KAREN. Yes. Because the man you love is the greatest. [*Suddenly, as if in a burst of terror.*] If he let me go, I think I should fall straight into the abyss. [*After a pause.*] He is strong and inflexible. He is a stately spruce standing in the sun — a light-loving tree, as we forest people say. [*Takes hold of his handbag when, again, he shows an inclination to leave.*] No, you must wait till Erling comes. He, too, wants to see you. He liked you so much. [*Abruptly.*] You should have heard how he called after you

HADELN. Did he call after me?

KAREN. Oh, yes. No sooner were you gone, than we rushed out — out through the door — and called after you. "Mr. Hadeln, Mr. Hadeln," we yelled. It was quite terrible to cry out into the black night like that. But it was too late. You were already too far away. Or perhaps the wind overcame our voices? [*With a cry of joy.*] There is Erling!

[ERLING *enters rapidly, carrying the field glasses.*] KAREN *takes hold of his arm and leads him up to* HADELN.]

KAREN. Don't you know Mr. Hadeln?

[HADELN, *who has been sitting with his head turned away, now looks up at* ERLING.]

ERLING. Yes, of course. I could n't see your face. So you are in these parts, too? Well, it's pleasant to meet a countryman once more.

KAREN. And I have offered Mr. Hadeln our best apologies for our lack of hospitality that night on the mountain? I told him how we stood there calling after him when he had gone?

ERLING. What?

KAREN. [*Smiling.*] Don't you remember? How we called after him with all our might?

ERLING. No. . . .

KAREN. [*To* HADELN.] I have quite forgot to ask you if you are going back to Norway now.

HADELN. Not until the fall.

ERLING. It will be fine to get home. And to get to work. This kind of life makes one stupid.

KAREN. Indeed?

ERLING. One is a human being besides.

KAREN. Indeed?

ERLING. One has other things to do in this world.

HADELN. [*With a wry smile.*] Especially you, I suppose.

[*Both look questioningly at him.*]

HADELN. You are the greatest man in the world, I hear.

KAREN. Shame on you! Telling tales! Shame!

ERLING. [*Smiling.*] What is that?

HADELN. Your wife says that you are the greatest man in the world.

ERLING. Nonsense. . . .

KAREN. The man you love is the greatest, I said. [*To* HADELN.] You must quote correctly, at least.

ERLING. Oh, that's nothing but sentimental love talk.

[KAREN *slightly startled by his tone.* HADELN *gives vent to his peculiar clucking laughter.*]

KAREN. Just look at Mr. Hadeln. What are you laughing at?

HADELN. [*Smiling.*] Once I heard of a lady who thought, whenever she was in love, that she had found the wisest man in

the world. She was a regular collector of wise men. And the latest was always the wisest. And once she got hold of a physicist — [*he clucks again*] — and then she went about telling everybody that he had discovered the law of gravitation — [*more clucking*] — which she really believed.

[ERLING *and* KAREN *laugh, too, partly carried away by* HADELN'S *queer way of laughing.*]

HADELN. [*Clucking.*] But the best thing of all was that finally he believed it, too. . . .

ERLING. The physicist?

[*All three burst into laughter.*]

KAREN. [*Threatening* HADELN *with her finger.*] I suppose you missed that black cloud in the bright sky just now?

ERLING. What's that?

KAREN. Oh, that's a secret between Mr. Hadeln and myself.

[HADELN *who has become serious and quiet again, picks up his handbag.*]

ERLING. [*Still laughing; to* KAREN.] But I have discovered no law of gravitation. I warn you of that right now.

KAREN. [*Smiling.*] No one has suspected you. [*To* HADELN.] Must you go already?

ERLING. Are you not taking the same train as we?

HADELN. No, I am going south.

ERLING. To Glatz?

HADELN. Yes.

ERLING. But then your train does not leave until seven minutes after ours.

KAREN. [*Smiling.*] The time table! [*To* HADELN.] Then you remember what you promised? [*When* HADELN *looks inquiringly at her.*] Oh, he has already forgotten! To look us up as soon as you get home.

ERLING. Yes, you must do that.

[*Both shake hands with him.* HADELN *goes out quietly to the right.* ERLING *goes over to the baggage.* KAREN *stands looking after* HADELN.]

KAREN. How strange!

ERLING. What?

[KAREN *puts her hands to her face and bursts into tears.*]

ERLING. [*Going up to her.*] What is it, Karen?

KAREN. It is as if I had never before understood how happy I am. [*Throwing herself at his neck.*] It seems impossible that it can last.

ERLING. Oh, please . . . . Now, Karen! Now!

KAREN. It is over now.

ERLING. And the train will soon be here. Have we got everything? [*Going over to the baggage again; smiling.*] You are a good one when it comes to lying.

KAREN. [*Failing to understand.*] Lying?

ERLING. You who said that we stood calling after him.

KAREN. [*Smiling.*] Don't you remember how we stood there and called out: "Mr. Hadeln! Mr. Hadeln!"

ERLING. No.

KAREN. You don't?

ERLING. No, it's a pure lie. . . .

KAREN. A lie! . . . That is something mean, I believe. . . . He was so unhappy, and I thought it would make him feel a little better.

ERLING. [*Jestingly.*] So that's what you were confiding to each other! Perhaps you even let him make love to you while I was braving the heat and the sun to get the field glasses.

KAREN. Why did you leave me?

ERLING. [*Smiling.*] The field glasses, woman!

KAREN. Bother the field glasses! [*After a pause.*] But you left me in the lurch, you did.

ERLING. [*Turning to look at her.*] Did I leave you in the lurch?

KAREN. Yes, when you said you could n't remember that we called after him.

ERLING. That I could n't remember yelling "Mr. Hadeln, Mr. Hadeln" ?

KAREN. [*Goes up to him, puts her arms about his neck and speaks very affectionately.*] Can you imagine ever ceasing to love me?

ERLING. How can you ask such a question — such a stupid question?

[*He kisses her on the brow.*]

KAREN. [*Leaves him, but stops after a few steps.*] Erling — suppose we don't go home?

ERLING. What?

KAREN. Not yet, I mean. Let us go to

Paris first, as we have planned so many times.

ERLING. Under no circumstances. Now we must go home.

KAREN. Only half a year more.

ERLING. Half a year!

KAREN. Five months. Four. Three. I beg you! Never have I loved you as now.

[*She clings very close to him.*]

ERLING. Now you are unreasonable, Karen.

KAREN. Henriksen wants so badly to remain in charge. And we can afford it, can't we?

ERLING. Oh, afford it! That's not the question. I cannot stand this any longer. I cannot stand being kept away from my work. I am looking forward to it with such pleasure. It is absolutely necessary for me, if I am not going to feel like a loafer.

KAREN. I could do anything for you. [*With strong emphasis.*] Anything!

ERLING. And I for you, Karen. But this is unreasonable.

KAREN. [*Pleadingly.*] Erling!

ERLING. No, Karen.

[*At this moment the peasant woman — who has entered from the platform on the left during the preceding conversation — utters a piercing shriek and rushes out. At the same time the noise of an incoming train is heard.* KAREN *and* ERLING *run to the door on the left.*]

KAREN. The boy has fallen down on the track! [*She runs out.*]

ERLING. [*Following her.*] Karen! — Are you crazy! Karen! [*He runs out after her.*]

KAREN. [*Is heard after a few moments crying very loudly outside.*] Erling! Erling!

[*Confused voices and a lot of noise may be heard from the outside. After a while a lot of people enter from the platform talking eagerly and loudly. The peasant woman with her boy are among the first to appear,* ERLING *and* KAREN *among the last. When the peasant woman has reached the middle of the room, she suddenly turns about, runs up to* ERLING *and* KAREN, *kneels down before them and kisses the hem of* KAREN'S *skirt.*]

KAREN. [*Turns quickly from the woman to* ERLING *and throws herself into his arms.*] I love you! I love you unto death!

CURTAIN

THE THIRD ACT

Two years later. ERLING'S *and* KAREN'S *villa in the woods. A pleasant room, richly and beautifully furnished. Here and there hunting paraphernalia have been used for decorative purposes. A bust of* KAREN. *There is a door in the rear wall leading to a balcony. Heavy draperies before the door. The room is on the second floor with a view over the tops of tall trees toward distant mountains. It is a bright evening early in the fall. Coffee things stand on a small table near the foreground.* KAREN *is walking about the room in a state of some disturbance and still more uncertainty of mind. She sits down for a while, but gets up again and begins to walk as before. She stops before the bust. Strokes her cheeks as if to smooth them. Then she goes over to a chair with a handbag on it and begins to pack down a few things. She pulls herself together as* ERLING *enters with* JOHANNES. ERLING *takes a rifle from the wall and hands it to the boy.*

ERLING. I think we'll try this one for a change.

KAREN. [*Pouring out coffee.*] Your coffee.

[*The barking of dogs is heard outside.*]

ERLING. The dogs are getting restless.

JOHANNES. They guess what's coming.

[*He goes out.*]

KAREN. Now I have packed what you care most for.

ERLING. [*Still busy with the guns.*] Thanks.

KAREN. Do you know what it is?

ERLING. No.

KAREN. [*With a feeble smile.*] You don't even know what you care most for.

ERLING. Really, I can't remember.

KAREN. [*Putting the handbag outside the*

door.] You are never more happy or more preoccupied than when you are going to the plantation.

ERLING. The trees and the beasts, girl. . . . [*Suddenly.*] That's what I care most for. Especially the plantations, of course. Why will you never go along nowadays?

KAREN. Oh — I merely seemed to be in the way.

ERLING. [*Preoccupied with the examination of another rifle.*] Perhaps you mean that the shoemaker ought to stick to his last. [KAREN *smiles.*]

ERLING. What do you smile at?

KAREN. You have begun to use so many proverbs lately.

ERLING. Have I? That's funny.

KAREN. You used to say that proverbs were made for the mob.

ERLING. Yes, and that they had a taste of every man's mouth. And now I use them myself. That shows the depth to which a man can fall. But what was it I was going to say? . . . We were talking about the plantation. . . . Oh, yes — a secret I wished to tell you. It is, that I am never more fond of you than when I am in the woods.

KAREN. I am more fond of you when you are here.

ERLING. [*Smiling.*] You said that so dryly and casually. And there is nothing more cozy than these late dinners we have each time I am going up the mountain. You are never more attractive. There is about you a sort of — I had nearly said coquettish charm, a little wistful, and so bewitching that, really, I almost have to tear myself away every time. And frankly speaking, I feel rather flattered by that little wistfulness.

KAREN. Yes, you are never in better spirits — than at these farewell dinners.

ERLING. [*Leaving the rifles and seating himself at the coffee table.*] How that wind blew last night! I wonder what happened to the young trees over at Losse. They are only four years old.

KAREN. Poor little trees.

ERLING. Yes — and you should have seen the telegraph pole on the hill. [*Taking a pencil from his pocket.*] The wires had been torn on both sides.

KAREN. [*Acting it out.*] And hung straight down. . . .

ERLING. [*Drawing.*] Yes — this way.

KAREN. How well I understand that.

ERLING. That's not difficult to understand.

KAREN. [*Smiling.*] How the telegraph pole must have felt — of course not. [*After a pause.*] That's the way the wind blew our first night together.

ERLING. [*Who has picked up a newspaper, smiling.*] I shall never forget it. What a marvellous evening, Karen.

KAREN. And night!

ERLING. And the appearance of that strange chap Hadeln.

KAREN. He is not an enthusiast like you.

ERLING. I guess you are right. The fire lies way down deep in him. He does not flare up as I do. It's too bad that he never comes to visit us up here. He is always on the go, anyhow. And it was so pleasant when he dropped in on us evenings in the city. He promised surely that he would come up once during the summer.

KAREN. I can very well do without him.

ERLING. That's so strange about you — almost morbid, I might say — that you seem able to do without anybody.

KAREN. Almost.

ERLING. Except me.

KAREN. Yes, except you.

ERLING. To-day your dress is so becoming again. . . . You are so different. . . . At times you look almost like a . . .

KAREN. Like a dowdy.

ERLING. [*Smiling.*] Yes — putting it mildly. [*The dogs are heard outside.*]

ERLING. [*Rising.*] Johannes is ready with the cart.

KAREN. Oh, sit a little while longer. It will still be light when you get there, even if you don't leave for another hour. Soon enough I shall be alone.

ERLING. [*Who has seated himself again.*] There you see. You ought not to be so very much alone. I do think it is a little lonely here at times.

KAREN. When you are not in the woods.

ERLING. Exactly. But why don't you ask one of your sisters up here, or both — or anybody else you may prefer?

KAREN. I don't care for company. It was I who wished that we should move up here earlier than both preceding years. It was I who wished it.

ERLING. [*Rising.*] But in the spring we go to Paris.

KAREN. Not on my account.

ERLING. Don't you wish to go to Paris either now?

KAREN. Oh, no . . . as we did n't go that time. . . .

ERLING. But I was willing to go at that time, too. . . .

KAREN. Yes, but not until I had — behaved heroically.

ERLING. Yes, I should say so! Merely to think of it makes me proud of you. [*Acting it out.*] There you swooped like a bird down on the track — put your claws in the child — swooped away again. [*Admiringly.*] Then you were happy, Karen, when you had saved that little boy.

KAREN. I did n't care a rap for the boy.

ERLING. What are you saying?

[*He laughs out loud.*]

KAREN. It was for your sake I did it.

ERLING. [*Still smiling.*] That's a good one. [*Having gone over to the window on the left.*] Say, Karen, what are you to do about your shower bath? The shed is blown down, I see.

KAREN. What does it matter? This window is the only place from which I can be seen. And there is no one in the whole house but me and the maids.

[JOHANNES *is heard cracking his whip.*]

ERLING. [*Goes out on the balcony.*] All right, Johannes, I am coming. [*Goes back to the window.*] There is plenty of water in the drain now. That's not a shower. It's a waterfall. It would be nice to see you there — right in the cascade.

KAREN. You think so?

ERLING. In the full sunlight, like now — yes! . . . But now for the serious side of life! [*Patting her.*] The day after to-morrow you have me back again.

KAREN. Convey my regards then.

ERLING. To whom?

KAREN. The trees.

ERLING. I shall bring them regards from the finest tree in the forest. [*He gives her a kiss.*] Good-bye.

KAREN. Good-bye.

[ERLING *goes out.* KAREN *stands for a moment in the middle of the room. Her features are distorted. Her eyes stray helplessly.*]

ERLING. [*Outside.*] Karen! Good-bye, Karen. The day after to-morrow.

[*One hears the cart moving.*]

KAREN. [*Runs to the balcony and cries with all her might.*] Erling! Erling! Come back a moment!

[*She walks back and forth.* ERLING *comes in, whip in hand. They stand for a moment looking at each other; as he is about to speak, she says:*]

KAREN. Don't you love me any longer?

ERLING. [*As if it were a joke.*] Good-bye, Karen. [*He is about to leave.*]

KAREN. Answer me. Don't you love me any longer?

ERLING. Yes.

KAREN. As much as ever?

ERLING. [*Thinks a while; then calmly.*] In a different way.

KAREN. [*Almost screaming.*] Take the whip and beat me! [*She walks back and forth a moment; then she stops and seems to wake up as if in surprise; smiles a little; speaks in a subdued voice, slowly, as if talking to herself.*] So you don't love me any longer, Erling Kruse?

ERLING. Yes, Karen. [*He goes up to her.*]

KAREN. [*As before.*] And when you came to me last night, it was because I begged you.

ERLING. Good heavens, Karen — that's the way it always goes.

[*He takes out his pencil and begins to draw on a newspaper lying on the table.*]

KAREN. In curves.

ERLING. Yes — and in the beginning it was I who suffered from unrequited love.

KAREN. Why did you take me then, when I did n't care as much for you as you for me? I resisted — I fought for my life.

ERLING. [*Quietly, almost sternly.*] Do you regret?

KAREN. [*Passionately.*] Regret having

been happy? Why should I regret it because I am unhappy now?

ERLING. [*Goes to the balcony and speaks calmly.*] Put back the horse, Johannes.

KAREN. [*Also at the balcony.*] Don't put back the horse, Johannes. [*To* ERLING; *pointing to the pencil which he is just putting back into his pocket.*] Can you draw this with that pedant of yours?

ERLING. [*Quietly and gently.*] You know there is nobody I care for but you, Karen.

KAREN. If there only was, so that I could hate her, and crush her, and triumph over her. You may be sure I should triumph. I should make you jealous. Give away a little of my body and a little of my soul — a little here and a little there. Like all the rest. But I have n't the strength. Because I love you. I love you.

[ERLING *goes to her.*]

KAREN. Don't touch me. I listen and listen, and there is no sign of help. [*Tenderly, almost to herself.*] I should make new discoveries about my own body — for you. . . . [*Throwing herself on the floor in front of him.*] Search within yourself. . . . See if there is nothing you have overlooked. We don't know ourselves. . . . How could I know that I should be lying like this. . . .

ERLING. Get up, Karen.

KAREN. [*Rising; halfway; shaking her head as in grief.*] Why?

ERLING. This won't do — either for you or me.

KAREN. Why should I not beg for my own life?

ERLING. [*Firmly.*] Get up.

[*He tries to help her. She rises unaided and goes over to a chair. He takes a seat at the other end of the room.*]

ERLING. [*Calmly and gently.*] I thought we had grown up so far that we could tear down the triumphal arch with its frills and flowers and garlands that we built to ourselves while we were still in a trance, thinking we were the only two people in the world. There are other people, you see, and there are other things than our love. [*Speaking with more emphasis and feeling.*] And if I now love you in a different way, it means only that I love you more tenderly, more fully, more humanly, I might say. Going up to the woods, I am no sooner beyond the gate than I begin to long for you. Even before I leave, it gives me pleasure to think of my longing. While we are still having dinner, even. And going about up there, strong and glad and full of my work — early in the fall, for instance, as now, when the whole forest rings with a deep note as if it were a titanic cello — then I tremble with infinite joy. I go about feeling myself the chosen one of all men. I smile cunningly at my own secret, so big, so joyous. I — the real winner in life am I. . . . Up there I begin to see you more clearly than when we are together here or in the city. And the more clearly I see you, the more I love you. I know — I believe — no, I *know* that you are waiting for me in the same way down here. I *know* it. Am I right, Karen?

KAREN. [*Nods affirmatively without looking up; speaks almost inaudibly.*] Yes, I have waited.

ERLING. [*Rising.*] I have torn down the triumphal arch of the time when you were the only one on one side and I on the other. And every garland I took down brought you closer to me. [*Smiling.*] Often it was hard work, for we had built pretty solidly. At last it became a real pleasure to tear down the last remnants — because it was only then I saw you as you are in reality — full of truth, and charm, and harmony. Yes, Karen — it is as if your mind and your body were singing together. [*Over to her.*] Never did your arm seem whiter or smoother; never did I see your mouth tremble, your eyes bursting with love, as . . .

KAREN. [*As before.*] As up there in the woods.

ERLING. As up there, indeed. Any pair of sentimental sillies can build themselves a triumphal arch. But really, it takes a rare fortune to build a home like yours and mine. [*Deeply moved.*] Take a look at the world. Look at other people. Look at almost all the people we know. [*Seats himself; very much stirred.*] It seems to me we

might well kneel down and give thanks — thanks for what we have got.

[KAREN *hiding her head, overcome by emotion.*]

ERLING. [*Sitting down beside her.*] My little Karen — don't you think that I know, too, that there is something mysterious, something enigmatic on the bottom of every soul — something about which we know nothing, and over which we have little or no power. But are we not here to help each other in that very connection? [*Puts his arm about her waist.*] And I am so happy and proud because my words can bring you back to peace. Now as ever, I feel that I am the one who can help you and restore the balance of your mind after a crisis like this. And, Karen, I can do so because I have learned to see you as you really are — [*with a smile*] now when the intoxication is gone. [*He rises and goes quickly to the balcony.*] Johannes! [*Stopping suddenly and breaking into laughter.*] Just look at Johannes. He has gone to sleep in the bottom of the cart. This is the peaceful life, I tell you. [*Back to* KAREN; *speaking in a burst of rejoicing.*] Karen, Karen! I feel that after what has occurred to-day a new happiness will shed its light on us. [*Sits down beside her, places her arm about his own neck and leans his head against her breast.*] My precious, precious Karen. How sweet it is to lean my head against your breast. And when I close my eyes, I can see . . . [*Looking up at her.*] We shall celebrate a new wedding night — as we did that first time on the mountain. We'll light the candles. Put champagne on the table. Drink out of my silver cups. On with all the prizes! [*He presses her violently to himself.*] Sorrow and suffering have made you a thousand times more beautiful. Now you are mine as never before.

KAREN. [*Disengages herself gently; goes to the balcony and looks out, speaks at first in a somewhat subdued tone, as if from a distance.*] But that was the time I was happy.

ERLING. What time?

KAREN. When we were the only two people in the world.

ERLING. [*With a suggestion of weariness.*] But we are not the only two people in the world.

KAREN. I hoped we were until to-day.

ERLING. But even then we were not.

KAREN. I thought we were.

ERLING. Don't you think what I just told you is true?

KAREN. Yes — unfortunately.

ERLING. Unfortunately?

KAREN. That's what makes the whole thing so unspeakably hopeless.

ERLING. What is hopeless?

KAREN. What you have told me to-day.

ERLING. That I am more fond of you now?

KAREN. Than when you loved me.

ERLING. Love — love. You must be a little reasonable. Everything in the world, in nature, in man's mind, is subject to development. We change as the years go by. And love changes, too.

KAREN. Then it is not my kind of love.

ERLING. [*A little more impatiently.*] We cannot always be new to each other.

KAREN. You were always new to me — in soul and in body.

ERLING. So you imagine now. But we cannot run counter to life itself. You are not always the same either. At any rate, you *will* turn into another person.

KAREN. A person, perhaps, whom I don't know, and with whom I have no happiness in common — an enemy who thinks quite differently of what to me is the only thing. . . .

ERLING. But then you will also look at everything differently.

KAREN. What does that help me now?

ERLING. It is as if you were talking into space. Your words have such a distant sound.

KAREN. Yes.

ERLING. You make yourself obdurate. You cover up your eyes. You will not see. No, you *will* not. [*He has risen and stands right in front of her;* KAREN *does not answer, but seems to be looking past and beyond him.*] What's your complaint against me?

KAREN. Nothing at all.

ERLING. But really — it's too childish to rebel against life itself.

KAREN. My life is also life.

ERLING. *Our* life is real life, Karen. [*Once more he speaks in a subdued tone and with great gentleness.*] You, who have such a refined nature and who are so quiet and sensible in all your ways, don't you feel that the softer and more subdued note characterizing our life lately has a far greater inward value, a far greater human value, than the — the sensual transports of that first time? It seems so strange that I should have to ask such a question. Think for yourself. All that we have lived together these years, all that we have in common — does it mean nothing at all to you? Our common joys and our common mishaps — all the inertia with which I have had to contend, all the ill-will and stupidity? And our memories? Our secrets? Our work? Our common faith in the future? Our place here? Our home?

KAREN. What has love to do with house and home and that kind of thing?

ERLING. [*Unable to answer at first.*] By the Lord — now I am scared! I don't know you any longer. Do you wish to destroy everything? All you say is so unreal that I can find no answer.

KAREN. [*Speaking more toward him, but still in the same far-off tone.*] No. This is the reality: that every day and every night you got a step farther away from me. And I followed you. Step by step. Followed you by stealth. And I loved you more for every step you took. Both because I loved you and because you left me.

ERLING. You are sick, Karen.

KAREN. No more now. Not after the day you said that you did n't love me as before — that you loved me in a different way. I knew it before, too. Night after night, while you slept, I knew it. But I did n't dare to let myself know it.

ERLING. Oh, Karen — dear Karen — these are things you imagine.

KAREN. But to-day — every fine word you spoke to me brought you many steps away from me, farther and farther — off into the woods, into yourself, and far away beyond those northern mountains over there. And now I can reach you no longer. [*Stretches her half-open hands with crooked fingers toward him.*] And you cannot see me. On and on you went without seeing me any longer.

ERLING. Without seeing you?

KAREN. No, you never saw me.

ERLING. This is nothing but some sort of sickly imagination that has got hold of you.

KAREN. [*With more feeling.*] Is it a sickly imagination that you did not see me?

ERLING. Yes — yes — yes.

KAREN. Did you see me at night, when I had my fingers on your throat? Did you see me then?

ERLING. Karen!

KAREN. [*Acting it out.*] This way! [*Repeating her gesture.*] On the verge of choking you. Night after night. I wished to stop you while I still could reach you.

[*They stand staring at each other. After a pause.*]

KAREN. [*Almost chanting.*] That was myself. My real self. [*After a while, with increased force.*] You were the man who had given me all the happiness in the world. And as such you were to die.

ERLING. [*After a long pause.*] And this is happening in our room — [*with a sweeping gesture.*] In your room and mine. It is you and I who stand here talking together. [*Bursting out.*] This is pure insanity!

KAREN. But this insanity is myself. And the triumphal arch, and the sensual transports, and the sickly imagination — that's myself. All of it is myself. And for me it is life, the real life, the only life worth living: because I have nothing to do with your trees, or your books, or your work for other people, or the country, except in so far as you have loved me. To me there was only one serious thing — that we loved each other. To me everything outside of our love is ugly, ugly, ugly. What did it matter if we became unhappy right down to the bottoms of our souls, as long as we loved each other? [*Speaking vigorously and clearly.*] When you loved me — not now, when you go around in the woods longing for me — then I had a feeling of life — of splendid, perilous life, with death close at hand. Then everything was grand and glorious. Then everything was luminous and logical, and I understood everything.

Then I loved everything — your trees and your pencil — because everything was consistently and joyfully indifferent except as jolly little drops that merely swelled the enormous, eternal wave carrying us two, the only people in the world. [*Still more forcibly and with violent intensity of emotion.*] And now! Here I stand in the light of this dreadful evening, in the midst of this desert stillness — I stand here like a stranger to myself — like a cold stone within which my soul is freezing. [*Wildly and fiercely.*] Oh, if I were standing in the desert, with a thousand miles of sand about me, and a million stars above me. I alone. Naked. Without a ribbon even. And a lion came toward me — so that once more I could feel the burst of life within me and the menace of death!

ERLING. [*Who has been staring dumbly into space, speaks at last in a deep, muffled, almost childish tone, as if not accustomed to talk.*] Can I help you, Karen?

KAREN. [*Calmly and coldly.*] No. Go to your woods. That's where the enthusiasts belong. Love has no use for them. It needs only men and women who can love. And you could n't, my little Erling.

ERLING. [*Almost pleadingly.*] Oh, Karen!

KAREN. [*Wildly and fiercely again.*] You wished to see me stripped. Under the shower down there. In the full sunlight. Now you see me. Shamelessly stripped. Without modesty. Everything laid bare. Do you see me now? Can you see the strumpet?

[ERLING *drops into a chair with his hands before his face.*]

KAREN. [*Draws a deep breath; then she goes over to* ERLING *and looks at him with a partly contemptuous and partly sorrowful smile.*] Now I am empty. [*With a new outburst.*] Until the night once more has filled me full out of its black well. [*Then almost tenderly.*] But, of course, it is not your fault, Erling.

ERLING. [*Raising his head; tenderly, but firmly.*] I don't understand. I can't understand. I feel poor and small. That is because I cannot understand. I did not know that such a thing existed.

KAREN. No, how could you know?

ERLING. [*Rising and speaking in a burst of feeling as he goes toward her.*] And I love you. I love you so that I could tear the wings off the wild bird that has perched on the ruins of our burnt home.

KAREN. [*Looking at him with flaming eyes and an expression of wild joy; almost breathless with expectation.*] Erling!

ERLING. But I cannot. I cannot because I love you.

[*He sits down, overcome by his feelings.*]

KAREN. [*Calmly and quietly again.*] Yes, Erling. But then you will do what I ask you — won't you?

ERLING. Yes — anything.

KAREN. I want you to go on to the plantations.

ERLING. No.

KAREN. But you promised.

ERLING. I don't go.

KAREN. If I ask you nicely?

ERLING. Do you think I can leave you now?

KAREN. That's very sweet of you. But you can very well leave me. I want so badly to be alone a while.

ERLING. I'll stay in the other room. You don't have to see me.

KAREN. Not that way. I want to *feel* alone.

ERLING. [*Frightened.*] But Karen . . .

KAREN. No need to be afraid. I am calm now. Quite calm.

ERLING. I don't dare.

KAREN. When such a crisis, or whatever you call it, is over, it is over. You know we women overdo things so easily. Now it is I who ask you to be sensible. It will be good for both of us to be alone. You go up to the plantations and get a little fresh air. I stay here and take a cold shower. [*With a slight smile.*] That is what I seem to need — so that my body and my soul may sing together once more. And when we meet again the day after to-morrow, we shall be a couple of different persons. [*Goes to the balcony.*] Johannes — he is coming now. [*Smiling.*] Pop, went the idyl! [*Kissing* ERLING.] Good-bye now.

ERLING. Can't I stay?

KAREN. No, Erling.

ERLING. [*Takes hold of her hand.*] Karen . . . [*Interrupting himself.*] No, I don't want to say anything more.

KAREN. You don't have to either. I can feel what you feel. [*After a pause.*] And never think of me in any other way.

[ERLING *smiles, but at the same time his whole face trembles; goes out.* KAREN *remains standing on the same spot, immovable.*]

ERLING. [*Is heard calling from the outside.*] Karen.

KAREN. [*Goes to the balcony.*] Yes.

ERLING. Throw down my whip.

KAREN. [*Runs to the chair where the whip is lying; stops suddenly; thinks for a moment; goes back to the balcony.*] You can send Johannes to get it.

JOHANNES. [*Entering a moment later.*] It will be dark before we get there.

[KAREN *points to the whip.* JOHANNES *picks it up and leaves.*]

ERLING. [*After a while; from the outside.*] Good-bye, Karen.

KAREN. [*By the balcony, but without showing herself.*] Good-bye.

[*She waves her handkerchief.* ERLING *is heard driving away.*]

KAREN. [*Sinks together.*] He is going! [*She pulls herself together; stands erect and haughty and defiant; then her limbs yield beneath her; she clasps her hands.*] Oh, God, God!

[*She sinks down on a chair and hides her face.*]

MAID. [*Entering from the right after a while.*] There is a man downstairs asking for you.

KAREN. [*Outwardly quite calm.*] Who is it?

MAID. I don't know him.

KAREN. Is it the judge?

MAID. No; it's no one I know. He came just as Johannes got out of sight at the turn.

KAREN. Did he ask for me?

MAID. Both for the master and you.

KAREN. Ask him to come up.

[KAREN *goes out by the lower door on the right. The* MAID *leaves by the upper door on the same side.*]

[HARTVIG HADELN *enters a moment later. He puts his hat and handbag on a chair and stops for a moment near the door. Then he catches sight of the bust of* KAREN *and goes over to it. Looks at it for a while, and once he puts his hand up to its cheek. Just then the door to* KAREN'S *room is opened, and she is seen looking in for a moment. Then she closes the door again. A few moments later* KAREN *appears. She has on a bathing cloak that covers her entirely. She steals up to* HADELN *from behind.*]

KAREN. So you found the way at last. [*She holds out her hand to him, so that her naked arm is seen.*] I'll be back in a moment — as soon as I have revived myself by a bath.

[*She goes out to the left. A moment later the splashing of the shower is heard.*]

KAREN. [*From the outside.*] Hadeln.

HADELN. [*Rises quickly but remains standing on the same spot.*] Yes.

KAREN. [*After a while.*] Hadeln.

[HADELN *goes to the window.*]

KAREN. [*As he gets there.*] Is it not beautiful? In this pouring sunlight?

CURTAIN

THE FOURTH ACT

Late at night the same day. The same room. Candles are lighted on the table in the foreground, on which appear also a champagne bottle and a bowl of fruit. The wide doors to the balcony stand open, but the curtains are drawn. KAREN, *dressed in a soft, light house dress, sits at the table.* HADELN *is walking back and forth, evidently in a very excited state of mind. He seems full of life and fire.*

HADELN. And you have chosen me for your confidant — it is to me you have revealed your secret. . . . Why, it is almost as if I had been a witness — no, as if I had taken part myself in all the remarkable happenings of this evening. I don't know how to thank you enough for this proof of trust and friendship.

KAREN. I have always felt that you were my friend.

HADELN. And yet, how little I knew about you! I guessed nothing, saw nothing. . . . Oh, I was a pretty poor friend.

KAREN. No, you are no poor friend — you have listened so nicely to me.

HADELN. [*Pleased.*] You think I listened nicely? Thank you! Thank you!

KAREN. And you asked in a way that made answering easy. And the way you looked at me with those eyes of yours made me understand that you would have stopped me if I had told anything but the truth. It was good for me, you may be sure, to have a chance of telling what has happened. It is almost as if it had made a change in everything.

HADELN. [*Impulsively, as he stops walking.*] No, no — not a change, I hope.

KAREN. As if it had made things a little easier anyhow.

HADELN. [*Walking again.*] How tall and powerful he seems in all his trustfulness — Erling, I mean. [*With a slight smile.*] Yes, I call him Erling, too.

KAREN. Yes, because he never lies.

HADELN. So firm and so high-minded; so blind and so manly.

KAREN. Oh, I had clear forgotten — here's the champagne we were to have when I had finished my fairy-tale.

HADELN. Fairy-tale is right. That is just the word for it. Because it is at once so simple and so extraordinary.

[KAREN *hands him the bottle, which he tries to open, but without success. He puts it back on the table and begins to walk again.*]

HADELN. This has been the richest hour of my life.

KAREN. [*Follows him with her glance for a moment; then.*] And the champagne?

[HADELN *makes another attempt to open the bottle.*]

KAREN. You had better use a knife.

HADELN. [*Having tried with a knife.*] I can't. Let us call the maid.

KAREN. The maid has gone to bed hours ago. [*Picks up the bottle.*] You have never opened a bottle of champagne before, I fear.

HADELN. No.

KAREN. Nor drank it either?

HADELN. Quite often — that is, now and then.

KAREN. [*Fills the glasses; with a smile, as she raises her own.*] Here is to a happy outcome of the battle of love!

HADELN. [*Almost frightened; with a gesture as if he wished to push the thought away.*] No, no, no! Don't let us think of that now — not now, when everything about us is full of solemnity. [*After a pause, quoting.*] "To tear the wings off the wild bird that has perched on the ruins of our burned house."

KAREN. [*Seating herself; speaks with a trace of fatigue.*] Did I tell you that, too? Of course, I told everything just as it happened, in order not to forget anything. [*Goes listlessly to the balcony; then quietly.*] Now it is too late for him to get home tonight.

HADELN. He believes everything must come out all right. And he is full of longing up there among his trees.

KAREN. [*Automatically.*] And all the time he gets farther and farther away.

HADELN. Yes, yes. Without knowing it. He goes toward the unknown, through what is unknown. He is not done in advance with whatever may happen. To him a new thing is really new. He is not a poor codger like me, who has to turn and twist everything like an old miser. . . . I cannot help laughing at myself when I remember how I went about for years thinking that men were too small and pitiful for me. For me! The fact was I did n't know them. I never saw them. I saw nothing but my own image in the mirror of my vanity. I was busy creating new heroic models of *complete* men, as I called it. And then, when I got out into life, and my models did n't fit, I was disappointed — but now I understand that I was pleasantly disappointed. Then I withdrew within my own self, proudly and contemptuously . . . no, I fled — fled like a cowardly cur — that's what I did! . . . As I went from place to place, from country to country, those models seemed to take shape — while all the time I was staring about me

with unseeing eyes. Mostly they came out of my own imagination, but at times I took some of the great dead and re-modeled them — spoiled them. Now and then I took some of the few living people I had met and made over their strong qualities — in order to make them still stronger, as I thought. With you, for instance, I have now been pottering these two or three years — adding and embellishing and cutting and polishing. And at the bottom of my soul I carried secretly the joyous thought of one day appearing before you in all my glory. You were to kneel humbly when I displayed my hidden treasures, my rich discoveries, my noble human models. And you were to call to me in anguish and prayer: "Behold what a man you are!" And now, behold the man I am not — behold the man I might be if I corresponded to your magnificent proportions. [*With eyes full of fire.*] Now — the first time I try to show what I have, I find it withered and decayed and reduced to dust — all of it. Here I stand with two empty hands. The whole art cabinet is crumbled to dust. It was not even knocked down — it just vanished like mist before the sun of life. [*Rapturously.*] And for that reason — never have I felt more free or happy or rich than I do now.

KAREN. [*Smiling.*] And all this because I am unhappy?

HADELN. [*As before.*] No poem could surpass what I have beheld to-day.

KAREN. A lot of good material, so to speak.

HADELN. Yes. But not that alone. I am no longer on the outside. I have become a link in the chain of life. I *care* for something. Two human beings have conquered me. I have seen two living creatures grow up, higher and higher, straight into the air, like strange, white, proud blossoms — no, like two big, splendid human beings. They leaned toward each other, and they leaned away from each other, and they grew taller and taller without suffering damage to their souls, without losing their beauty, without staining each other — way up into the sky.

KAREN. [*With some impatience.*] And what are you going to do with it now — all this that you call beautiful and solemn? Just wander along endlessly as before, and think of it?

HADELN. Yes, I want to hold on to it. Perhaps some day I, too, may take part — in going toward the unknown.

[*He seats himself.*]

KAREN. [*Running to the balcony.*] Hush! [*She listens for a moment; then she goes back and sits down opposite him.*] And how about yourself?

HADELN. Myself — what do you mean?

KAREN. Are you not also a living human being, you who sit there staring at me with those deep, deep eyes of yours, so that mine must drop before them?

HADELN. [*Looking at her with intense but controlled emotion.*] If I owned a sorrow now, it would no longer be a dead sorrow that lay rotting and fermenting in my mind. It would be a living, splendid sorrow. [*Rising.*] Good-bye, Mrs. Karen.

KAREN. [*Rising quickly.*] Do you mean to leave? You are not crazy? Are you so frightened by life that you must run away?

HADELN. [*Almost panic-stricken.*] There you see! I am a coward. A miserable coward. I thought I could escape.

KAREN. [*Standing above him, her eyes holding him.*] What did you think you could escape from?

HADELN. It was the approaching decision that scared me.

KAREN. [*As before.*] What decision?

HADELN. [*Wringing his hands.*] When you love him and he loves you, and yet you cannot reach each other — then — then . . .

KAREN. [*Goes to an old wardrobe that stands open and takes out two silver drinking cups; while returning to the table she stops suddenly with a cup in either hand; goes to the balcony and listens; then back to the table.*] Do you think he would have gone away if he loved me?

HADELN. No, when you ask me like that, I cannot understand. But maybe, if I could hear his own explanation . . .

KAREN. [*Interrupting him.*] Either one loves, or one does not love.

HADELN. But you asked him to go.

KAREN. Asked him — asked him! Look

— now we'll drink together. Out of silver cups. [*She fills the cups.*] His prizes. Here's to you — you sagacious, simple-minded child who needs help and care much more than I do!

HADELN. [*Burying his face in his hands.*] Oh, Mrs. Karen — Karen.

KAREN. [*Softly and tenderly, in anticipation of what she expects him to say.*] Yes.

HADELN. How you do love him!

KAREN. [*In the same tone, but with a suggestion of scorn.*] And that makes you very unhappy?

HADELN. [*Looking up quickly.*] No, no! You must not believe that.

KAREN. [*Walks impatiently away from him; then she returns and stops right in front of him.*] No. Listen to me. No! I do not love him. Not as he stood there, that big hulk of a weakling, with tears in his eyes. Nor when he stood over me with the whip in his hand.

HADELN. [*Rising.*] With the whip?

KAREN. Yes, with the whip. And he does not love me. I have been his mistress. It was so convenient to have me as a part of his well-ordered house — a foil for his senses, that's what I was.

HADELN. And you, who could n't find words enough to describe how frank and honest he was, how kind and considerate — how full of love for you in his own way?

KAREN. Yes, in his own way. As part of his comfort. As something — something nice he could n't do without. But did he ever really see me? Did he notice what I felt or suffered? Did he know anything about my tears in the night, or my dead smiles in the day? Did he notice how dead they were?

HADELN. [*Eagerly.*] But he had to learn from life. We don't know everything at once.

KAREN. [*More and more excitedly.*] Yes, we do know everything at once. We cannot go through life rehearsing a performance that will never take place. And I believe he saw, that he guessed, the state I was in. But he did n't wish to see. It scared him. He hoped it would pass. That I should be crushed to earth by my love. Then he would magnanimously raise me up. He proved himself a coward — not a gentle and considerate man — like you.

HADELN. [*Earnestly and firmly.*] You must not speak badly of Erling Kruse, whom you have taught me to like. You feel hurt in your love, and for that reason you talk in malice. But I am not so mean that I can be a party to it. And so I would be if I listened to such things when he cannot defend himself.

KAREN. [*With a curt, cold laughter.*] He who is gone does not exist.

HADELN. [*Looking sadly at her for a while; then.*] I understand that you are raking in the coals — that you are searching for new strength to live your life.

KAREN. [*Energetically.*] The new strength is there. I can feel it. Strength to take life as it is.

HADELN. [*With great sincerity.*] Don't say those nasty things. Don't take away from me what you have given me. Permit me to see you again as you were a moment ago — full of majesty and tranquillity and beauty. It has come to be the one thing of which life consists for me.

KAREN. So we are to stagger along under the burden of our misery, Erling and I, just to let you enjoy the spectacle? Perhaps to give you the chance of writing a poem about it?

HADELN. [*Startled; after a pause, deeply stirred.*] That may have played a part, too. But it was not the main thing. Because, Karen — Karen . . .

KAREN. Because you love me.

HADELN. Love [*he does not quite finish the word*] . . . Have I ever said a word . . . [*Pause.*] I wish I had never come here.

KAREN. [*In a harsh tone; her eyes still lighted by the same cold smile.*] It is strange that you did n't come before.

[HADELN *sits down overpowered by feeling.*]

KAREN. That's why I called you when I was taking my bath.

HADELN. [*Sits thinking for a few moments; then.*] I had forgotten. . . .

KAREN. Oh, things of that kind stick in a man's mind, even if he does n't know it.

[HADELN *rises and begins walking*

back and forth in an aimless fashion.]

KAREN. [*Follows him with her eyes; then in the same hard and cold voice.*] Well?

[HADELN *makes a sudden movement toward her; then he pulls himself together and draws away from her again.*]

KAREN. [*With arms folded; in the same tone as before.*] Well?

HADELN. [*Approaching her once more.*] One thing I have seen to-day. There is one thing I can feel in my innermost soul. There is one thing that fills me with a joy beyond all control.

KAREN. [*Expectantly.*] And that is?

HADELN. I can read it in your wild eyes.

KAREN. What do you see? Speak, man!

HADELN. That love kills.

KAREN. [*Shrinking.*] Does it kill?

HADELN. Always.

KAREN. Whom does it kill?

HADELN. [*Hesitatingly.*] Some one — one or the other.

KAREN. Tell me whom?

HADELN. The one that cannot dole it out grain by grain — the one that has not turned love into a habit. [*With increasing force.*] And you have not done so. You cannot do it. You are strong. But love is stronger than you. You are at its mercy. And it will triumph over you.

KAREN. And this is the thing that fills you with joy?

HADELN. [*His features become contorted; his lips seem to stiffen; then he speaks firmly and exultantly.*] Yes.

[KAREN *stares at him; a barely noticeable smile flits across her face.*]

HADELN. [*Sits down, shaking his head.*] What business had I to come here? Why did I not stay among my miserable models — my poor misshapen human beings? Whenever I step into the light, I do so at the wrong moment. Forgive me! Forgive me! I did not mean it, as I said it. It was nothing but a morbid fancy. You stood there opposite me, cold as a corpse, and goaded me on. It was nothing but a gurgitation of all that grudging greed, all that futile conceit, that possesses a man who, like me, goes about trying to appear more truthful and more righteous than other people. Believe me — oh, believe me — it was nothing but poisonous talk — because you stood there so radiant, so marvellously full of life and passion.

KAREN. [*Goes up to him so softly that he does not notice her coming; bends over him and speaks very gently and quietly.*] Oh, that velvety voice of yours!

[HADELN *trembles from head to foot.*]

KAREN. It seems to caress me. To pat my cheek softly and gently. Why don't you do so? [*She takes his hand.*] And the softness and whiteness of your hand . . . You have not the fists of a lumber-jack — with bark on them. Pat me!

[*She puts her hand to her own cheek.*]

HADELN. [*Feebly, with a show of deprecation.*] No, no, no!

KAREN. What peace and calm it brings! How sweet it is to feel your soul rising toward mine. So tenderly — oh, so tenderly!

HADELN. [*As before.*] I am nothing to you but an accidental passer-by.

KAREN. Is not everything accidental, Hartvig Hadeln, when love stands ready. [*After a pause.*] That time, on the mountain, I did not love him. He compelled me — in spite of my resistance. How different this is. [*Stroking his hair.*] You do not compel me. You are like a soft wax, upon which I can stamp my own self just as it is. You believe that you hurt others. But you are the worst sufferer. You understand everything. Oh, how I could assist you and console you.

HADELN. [*Moaning.*] Oh, Karen — Karen — why do you say these things to me? You, who belong to him with all your soul and with the smallest particle of your body!

KAREN. [*Quietly.*] We no longer live as man and wife.

[*She walks slowly away from him to the balcony, where she stands looking out.*]

HADELN. [*Looks after her for a while; then he runs up to her and embraces her passionately; pushes her head backwards*

and covers her mouth with wild kisses.] Yes! Yes! I love you! I love you! I love you!

[KAREN *makes no resistance.* HADELN *lets her go for a moment.* KAREN *remains standing on the same spot like a statue.*]

HADELN. What have I done? Why have n't I seen before how wretchedly unhappy you are?

KAREN. [*Stands as before, but speaks as if about to lose control of her mind.*] Then I am all the more in need of tenderness, of love, of giving myself to the utmost — to the very utmost. [*Puts her hands to her head; sways as if about to fall; then in an outburst of passion.*] And he is not here! [*She breaks into wild sobbing.*] Why is he not here? Why is he not here?

[*Drops down on a chair.* HADELN *stands helpless, looking about in a bewildered fashion. The sound of wheels is heard from the outside.* KAREN *rises. Both stand listening. The noise of the wheels is heard more and more plainly.*]

ERLING'S VOICE. [*Heard from a distance.*] Karen! Karen! [*Then more closely.*] Karen!

[KAREN *tries to answer, but cannot. Her jaws tremble. Suddenly she puts out the candles, leaving the room almost in darkness.*]

KAREN. [*To* HADELN.] Sit down there.

[*Points to the sofa and makes a movement as if about to seat herself beside him.*]

ERLING'S VOICE. [*Now very close.*] Are you there, Karen?

KAREN. [*As if changing her mind.*] No. [*Once more in full control of herself.*] Go out on the balcony. Stay there until I call you.

HADELN. But . . .

KAREN. It is the first thing I ever asked of you — and perhaps the only one.

[HADELN *steps out on the balcony.* KAREN *stands near the middle of the room, a little toward the background.*]

[ERLING *enters hastily.*]

ERLING. I could n't! I could n't go on being angry. I had to come home. I longed and longed as I sat there thinking of you in the desert, with all the stars above you.

KAREN. Naked?

[ERLING *takes hold of her hand and wants to close her in his arms.*]

KAREN. You are late.

ERLING. I hurried all I could.

KAREN. *Too* late.

ERLING. *Too* late?

KAREN. It is a question of watching the right moment in this fleeting world.

ERLING. [*Without catching the drift of her words.*] And who is here? The maid spoke of company. [*Catches sight of the table and goes a little nearer to it.*] Who is it, Karen? [*When she gives no answer, he says with a smile.*] Is it to be a secret? [*After a pause.*] You are so . . . What is it?

KAREN. You see, we brought out champagne. And all the silver cups — your prizes.

ERLING. [*Quietly.*] But I don't quite understand, Karen. . . .

KAREN. I have had a new wedding night. . . .

ERLING. [*Puzzled.*] That's a strange sort of joke. [*Goes to her and speaks tenderly.*] Are you not well, Karen?

KAREN. I am free. We two have ceased to live together.

ERLING. Have we ceased to live together?

KAREN. Yes — so far are you from me.

[ERLING *looks questioningly at her.*]

KAREN. Am I not free? Am I not the master of my own soul and body? Did I not tell you before you left, that I was shamelessly stripped, without all decency?

ERLING. I don't understand. . . .

KAREN. [*Comes forward; points to the sofa, speaks with eyes ablaze.*] There! — That's where it happened.

[ERLING *leaps toward her. She grabs a hunting knife from the wall.*]

KAREN. Why did you not bring your whip along?

ERLING. [*Utters a hoarse cry as in horror at having to believe her; then more calmly.*] You need no knife against me.

KAREN. Are you sure it was meant for you? [*They stand staring at each other.*]

ERLING. Who is it?

KAREN. So that's the first thing you think of?

ERLING. [*Runs into the room on the right, but returns at once; stares at her; then, as she remains cold as before.*] Who is it?

[*He runs toward the door on the left.*]

KAREN. He is gone. [ERLING *stops.*]

KAREN. Do you know now what it is to love?

ERLING. [*In despair.*] But what is this? What is it? [*With a sudden break of spirit, as he turns to her.*] Please have mercy on me.

KAREN. [*Moaning.*] It is you who must help me, for now I am in real danger. [*In a scream.*] Help me!

ERLING. [*A little more quietly.*] You have thrown me into the water, and you stand on the wharf calling for me to help you. Now you'll have to speak, Karen — explain what it is. . . . You won't? Who has been here? You won't speak? [*He stands pondering for a few moments.*] He cannot be gone very far.

[*He runs out through the door on the left.* KAREN *drops the knife on the floor and puts her hands up to her face.*]

[HADELN *enters from the balcony, looking like a broken and worn-out man.* KAREN *does not even notice him.*]

HADELN. Mrs. Karen.

[*A shock passes through* KAREN; *as she turns and looks at him she does not seem to recognize him at once.*]

HADELN. [*Gently and tenderly.*] You have no use for me any longer?

KAREN. No.

HADELN. I can leave again?

KAREN. Yes.

HADELN. [*Partly to himself.*] So I can leave?

[KAREN *turns away her face.* HADELN, *who has caught sight of the knife, picks it up from the floor and throws it on a small marble-topped table close to* KAREN, *so that it strikes the top with a ringing noise.* KAREN *gives him a quick glance.* HADELN *looks away. Then he picks up his handbag and walks out quietly.*]

KAREN. [*Stands undecided for a moment; then she mutters.*] Erling! [*Cries more and more loudly.*] Erling! Erling!

[*She flings herself down on the little table; then rises again and stands fumbling with the knife; finally she drops it and runs to the balcony to look out. Voices are heard in the stairway outside the door on the right.* KAREN *runs back to the little table and picks up the knife; then she steps out on the balcony, where she stands hidden behind the curtains so that only her left clinched hand remains visible.*]

[ERLING *enters dragging with him* HADELN, *whom he holds by the wrist.*]

ERLING. [*Calls through the door.*] Karen! [*When there is no answer, he says to* HADELN.] So you were going to disappear.

HADELN. Yes.

ERLING. Why?

HADELN. Because your wife told me I could go.

ERLING. Because you have — because you are her lover? Have been for a long time, perhaps?

HADELN. [*Straightening himself up and speaking with emphasis.*] No.

ERLING. She has told me herself.

HADELN. I heard it.

ERLING. You heard it?

HADELN. I stood on the balcony.

ERLING. You were listening?

HADELN. She asked me.

ERLING. Do you do everything she asks?

HADELN. [*With a fervor that he vainly tries to suppress.*] Yes.

ERLING. Then you heard what she herself told me?

HADELN. She spoke out of utter despair, because she loves you and because she thinks that you do not love her.

ERLING. [*Walks back and forth a while.*] Karen! [*After a pause.*] What am I to

believe? You are obliged to deny it, of course.

HADELN. Believe me, Erling Kruse. Believe me. I wish you no harm. It is the truth I tell you.

ERLING. What do you want here? Why did you come here? What have we two to do with each other? [*Pause.*] How shall I ever get a moment's peace of mind? All that we had of happiness and peace. . . . I can never know what is true and what is not. I can never more believe her. It will be one long hell of tormenting uncertainty. [*Speaks in a low voice that almost breaks into a sob.*] Karen! Karen!

[*He throws himself on a chair close to the balcony. A scream is heard from the balcony — a long-drawn, agonized scream. Both men rush to the spot.* KAREN *sinks slowly backward into the room, dragging the curtain with her as she falls. A starlit sky becomes visible, with light wisps of mist here and there. The five lowermost stars of the Dipper (or Charles's Wain) are seen in all their glory, framed by the tree-tops.*]

ERLING. [*Bending over her.*] Karen — Karen! [*To* HADELN.] Water!

[HADELN *brings a glass of water from the table.*]

ERLING. Karen — answer me! [*He bathes her forehead with water; a moment later he discovers blood on his hand and cries in horror.*] Blood!

HADELN. [*Almost screaming.*] Blood?

ERLING. [*At the top of his voice.*] Johannes! Johannes!

[*In the meantime* HADELN *is seen walking back and forth in a violent state of excitement. He is trying to speak, but cannot. He is constantly putting one hand up to his forehead.*]

[*The* MAID *enters.*]

ERLING. My wife is hurt. Tell Johannes to drive for the doctor. As fast as he can go.

MAID. [*As she is leaving.*] Is it dangerous?

ERLING. [*Merely waves her out; bends over* KAREN *again; rises abruptly into kneeling position and remains in that way.*] She is dead.

HADELN. [*Approaches on tiptoe; bends down to look at* KAREN; *cries out loudly and wildly.*] Yes! [*He returns nervously to the middle of the room.*] I knew it.

ERLING. [*Mutters without understanding him.*] You knew it?

HADELN. I could have kept her from it.

ERLING. What . . . ?

HADELN. [*Unable to control himself any longer.*] Because it was I who threw the knife on the table so that it rang out.

ERLING. And you did n't stop her?

HADELN. No, because I loved her, and she loved you.

ERLING. [*Rising up.*] Yes — me!

HADELN. [*Ecstatically.*] Is it not more beautiful for love to kill than to die?

ERLING. [*In a numbed manner, still unable to grasp the truth.*] Karen is dead.

HADELN. [*Goes nearer to* ERLING, *his eyes blazing with madness.*] Be proud, Erling Kruse. Make a cross on your door. A cross of blood. As a sign that love has visited your house. [*Points to the sky; speaks with a strange joy in his voice.*] Behold the stars — her stars!

ERLING. [*Recalling* KAREN'S *words as he stands staring at* HADELN.] And the desert.

HADELN. The starry desert. There is Charles's Wain, ready and waiting. There is the tomb. The golden tomb — in which all shall rest who have been slain by love. [*Calls out in a wildly irrational ecstasy.*] We are coming!

[*He leaps from the balcony with outstretched arms as if trying to reach the stars.*]

ERLING. [*Stands for a while as if unable to make out anything of what is happening; then he looks dull-eyed about the place and says in a toneless voice.*] Our home. . . . [*Finally he drags himself to* KAREN, *kneels beside her, puts his face close to hers and says as if expecting an answer.*] Karen?

CURTAIN

APPENDIX

I. AUTHORS AND PLAYS
II. NOTES ON THE PRODUCTION OF PLAYS
III. A WORKING BOOK LIST IN CONTEMPORARY DRAMA
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APPENDIX

I. AUTHORS AND PLAYS

Dates in italics refer to the date of production; in roman type to the date of publication.

ENOCH ARNOLD BENNETT, born in North Staffordshire, England, May 27, 1867; was first in the law and journalism, and has devoted himself exclusively to literature since 1900. PLAYS: Cupid and Common Sense, *1908*, 1909; What the Public Wants, *1909*, 1909; The Honeymoon, *1911*, 1911; Milestones (with Edward Knoblock), *1912*, 1912; The Stepmother; A Good Woman; A Question of Sex (published as Polite Farces for the Drawing-Room, 1912); The Great Adventure, *1913*, 1913; Rivals for Rosamund (one act), *1914;* The Title, *1918*, 1918; Judith, *1919*, 1919; Sacred and Profane Love, *1919*, 1919. Bennett's novel, Helen with the High Hand, was adapted to the stage by R. Pryce, *1914*.

EDWARD KNOBLOCK (born Knoblauch), born in New York City, April 7, 1874; educated at Harvard; became a naturalized British subject in 1916; studied drama in Paris. All playwriting done in Europe. PLAYS: The Partikler Pet, *1910;* The Shulamite (with Claude Askew), 1910; The Cottage in the Air (adapted from Priscilla's Fortnight), *1910;* Sister Beatrice (adapted from Maeterlinck), 1910; The Farm, *1911;* Kismet, an Arabian Night, *1911*, 1911; Milestones (with Arnold Bennett), *1912*, 1912; Discovering America, *1912;* The Headmaster (with Wilfred T. Coleby), *1913;* England Expects (with Seymour Hicks), *1914;* The Hawk (from the French of de Croisset), *1914;* My Lady's Dress, *1914*, 1916; Marie-Odile, *1915*, 1915; Mouse, *1915;* Hajj, *1916;* The Way to Win; A War Committee; How to Get on; The Little Silver Ring (sketches), *1915;* Long Live England, *1915;* Paganini, *1916;* Home on Leave, *1916;* Tiger, Tiger, *1918;* One, *1920*.

WILLIAM SOMERSET MAUGHAM, born in 1874; was educated at King's School, Canterbury, and at Heidelberg; first studied medicine; novelist and dramatist since his early twenties. PLAYS: Schiffbrüchig (at Berlin, in German), *1902;* A Man of Honour, *1903*, 1911; Lady Frederick, *1907*, 1911; Jack Straw, *1908*, 1911; Mrs. Dot, *1908*, 1911; The Explorer, *1908*, 1912; Penelope, *1909*, 1912; Smith, *1909*, 1913; The Tenth Man, *1910*, 1913; Grace, *1910;* Loaves and Fishes, *1911;* Landed Gentry, *1913;* The Land of Promise, *1914;* Caroline, *1916;* Our Betters, *1917*, 1921; Love in a Cottage, *1918;* Cæsar's Wife, *1919;* Home and Beauty (called, in America, Too Many Husbands), *1919*.

JOHN DRINKWATER, born June 1, 1882; poet and critic; co-founder of the Pilgrim Players, from which developed the Birmingham Repertory Theater; director and producer Birmingham Repertory Theater, for which his plays have been written. PLAYS: Cophetua (one act in verse), *1911;* Rebellion (three acts in verse), *1914*, 1914; The Storm, *1915;* The God of Quiet, *1916*, 1917; X = 0, A Night of the Trojan War, *1917*, 1917; Pawns, *1917*, 1917 (these three published as Pawns, Three One-Act Plays in Verse, 1917); Abraham Lincoln, *1918*, 1918.

ST. JOHN GRIER ERVINE, born in Belfast, Ireland, December 28, 1883; dramatist and novelist; manager Abbey Theater, Dublin, 1915. PLAYS: The Magnanimous Lover, written 1907, published 1912, produced Abbey Theater, *1913;* Mixed Marriage, *1911*, 1911; The Critics, *1913*, 1914; The Orangeman, *1913*, 1914; Jane Clegg, *1912*, 1914; John Ferguson, *1916*, 1915. (Four Irish Plays, including Mixed Marriage, The Magnanimous Lover, The Critics, The Orangeman, published 1914.)

LORD EDWARD JOHN MORETON DRAX PLUNKETT DUNSANY, the 18th Baron of a line created in 1439, was born July 24, 1878; wrote Studies and Romances of Irish Legendry, 1909; The Book of Wonder, 1912, and other studies in Celtic romance; first plays were published in *The Irish Review*, Dublin. PLAYS: The Glittering Gate, *1909*, 1914; King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior, *1911*, 1914; The Gods of the Mountain, *1911*, 1914; The Golden Doom, *1912*, 1914; The Lost Silk Hat, *1913*, 1914 (these bound in one volume, New York, 1914); The Tents of the Arabs, *1916*, 1915; A Night at an Inn, *1916*, 1916; The Queen's Enemies, *1916*, 1916; The Laughter of the Gods, *1919* (these four plays are included in Plays of Gods and Men, published 1917); Fame, *1920*.

EUGENE WALTER, born in Cleveland, Ohio, November 27, 1874; engaged in journalism, amusement enterprises, and authorship. PLAYS: Sergeant James, *1901;* The Flag Station, *1905;* Paid in Full, *1907;* The Wolf, *1908;* The Easiest Way, *1908*, 1921; Inside the Circle, *1908;* Just a Wife, *1910;* Boots and Saddles, *1910;* Fine Feathers, *1911;* The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, *1911;* Just a Woman, *1916;* The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, *1916;* The Knife, *1917;* The Assassin, *1917;* Friendship, *1917;* Q 4, *1917;* The Sinking Ship, *1917;* The Challenge, *1919;* The Mongrel Girl, *1920.*

JOSEPHINE PRESTON PEABODY (MRS. L. S. MARKS), born in New York; educated at Radcliffe; taught for two years at Wellesley; has published several volumes of verse, among these being The Wayfarers, 1898; Fortune and Men's Eyes, 1900; The Book of the Little Past, 1908; The Singing Man, 1911. PLAYS: Marlowe, a drama, 1901; The Wings, 1905; The Piper, *1910*, 1909; The Wolf of Gubbio, 1913; The Chameleon, 1917.

GEORGE COCHRANE HAZELTON, JR., born in Boscobel, Wisconsin; engaged in the practice of law and in theatrical studies; author of novels and works on art and architecture. PLAYS: Mistress Nell, *1900;* Captain Molly, *1902;* Edgar Allan Poe (also produced as The Raven), *1904;* The Cracksman, *1908;* The Yellow Jacket (with J. Harry Benrimo), *1912*, 1913; Aphrodite (after Pierre Frondaie's French version of the work by Pierre Louys), *1919;* The Haunted Pajamas. *1920.*

J. HARRY BENRIMO, known as "BENRIMO," a native of California, was a member of the Morosco and Alcazar stock companies in San Francisco; played the part of the Pipe Bowl Mender in the play of Chinese life in California, The First Born. Coming east was associated with Frohman and Belasco; recently director of productions in England. PLAYS: The Yellow Jacket (with George C. Hazelton, Jr.), *1912*, 1913; The Willow Tree (with Harrison Rhodes), *1917.*

GEORGES DE PORTO-RICHE, born in Bordeaux, May 20, 1849; poet and dramatist; his first work of verse was published in 1871; early plays were in verse. PLAYS: Le Vertige, 1873; Un Drame sous Philippe II, 1875; Le deux fautes, 1879; Don Juan (adaptation from Shadwell), 1879; Vanina (fantasy), 1879; Le Chance de Françoise, *1888*, 1883 (translated as Françoise's Luck, 1915, and as Lover's Luck, *1916*); L'Infidèle, *1890*, 1898; L'Amoureuse, *1891*, 1898; Le Passé, *1898*, 1898 (the last four published under the title of Théâtre d'Amour, 1898); Le Malefilâtre, *1904*, 1904; Le Vieil Homme, *1911*, 1911; Zubiri, *1912;* Le Marchand d'Estampes, 1918.

EDMOND EUGÉNE ALEXIS ROSTAND, born April 1, 1868, at Marseilles; he was elected to the French Academy in 1902 and died December 2, 1918. PLAYS: Le gant rouge, 1888; Les deux Pierrots, 1891; Les Romanesques, *1894*, 1894 (translated as The Fantasticks, 1900, and The Romancers, 1901); La Princesse Lointaine, *1897*, 1897 (translated as The Princess Far Away, 1899, and as The Lady of Dreams, 1912); Cyrano de Bergerac, *1897*, 1897 (variously translated under same title, 1898); La Samaritaine, 1898; L'Aiglon, *1900*, 1900 (translated under same title, 1900); Chantecler, *1910*, 1910 (translated under same title, 1910); Le bois sacré, *1910*, 1910.

SACHA GUITRY, the son of Lucien Guitry, the famous actor of the Comédie Française and director of the Renaissance Theater, was born February 21, 1885; began early to write for the stage and has been a prolific composer of stage pieces of the daintier sort. CHIEF PLAYS: Le page, *1901;* Le Kwtz, *1905*, 1907; Le mari qui faillit tout gâter, *1905*, 1908; Nono, *1905;* Chez les Zoaques, *1906*, 1907; Les Nuées d'Aristophane, *1907;* La Clef, *1907*, 1907; Petite Hollande, *1908*, 1908; Le Scandale de Monte Carlo, *1908*, 1908; Le veilleur de nuit, *1911*, 1911; Jean III; ou l'irrésistible vocation du fils Mondoucet, *1912*, 1912; Un beau mariage, *1912*, 1912; La prise de Berg-op-zoom, *1913*, 1913 (adapted as The Real Thing, *1913*); Il faut l'avoir (with A. Willemetz), *1915;* Jean de la Fontaine, *1916;* Faisons un Rêve, *1916* (adapted as Sleeping Partners, *1917*) ;L'archevêque et son fils, *1918;* Deburau, *1918* (translated *1920*); Pasteur, *1919*, 1919. (See Une Quinzaine des petites pièces, announced for publication in 1920.)

LUDWIG THOMA, born January 21, 1867, at Oberammergau, Bavaria; his first writing was done under the name of Peter Schlemiehl; he has long been associated with the magazine *Simplicissimus.* PLAYS: Die Medaille (one act), *1902*, 1902; Die Lokalbahn, *1902*, 1902; Moral, *1908*, 1908 (translated 1916); Erste Klasse (one act), *1910*, 1910; Lottchen's Geburtstag (one act), *1911*, 1911; Magdalena, *1912*, 1912; Das Säuglingsheim, *1913*, 1913; Die Sippe, *1913*, 1913; Der Erste August, *1914*, 1914.

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER, born in Vienna, May 15, 1862, the son of a noted throat specialist; himself studied medicine and remained in scientific work for ten years after taking his degree in 1885; has written novels as well as plays. PLAYS: Anatol (seven dramatic scenes), *1889–1891*, 1893 (paraphrased under same name by G. Barker. 1911); Das Märchen, *1891*, 1894; Paracelsus

(one act), *1892*, 1899; Liebelei, *1894*, 1896 (translated as Light o' Love, 1912); Freiwild, *1896*, 1897; Reigen (dialogues), *1896–1897*, 1903; Das Vermächtnis, *1897*, 1898 (translated as The Legacy, 1911); Die Gefährtin (one act), *1898*, 1899; Der Grüne Kakadu (one act), *1898*, 1899 (translated as The Green Cockatoo, 1913); Der Schleier der Beatrice, *1899*, 1900; Die Frau mit dem Dolche (one act), *1900*, 1902 (translated as The Lady with the Dagger, 1904); Lebendige Stunden (one act), *1901*, 1902 (translated as Living Hours, 1906, and The Hour of Recognition, 1917); Die letzten Masken (one act), *1901*, 1902 (translated as Last Masks, 1917); Literatur (one act), *1901*, 1902 (translated as Literature, 1914; the last four published together, 1902, under the title Lebendige Stunden); Der Puppenspieler (one act), *1902*, 1906; Der tapfere Cassian, *1903*, 1906; Der einsame Weg, *1903*, 1904 (translated as The Lonely Way, 1915); Die griechische Tänzerin, *1904*, 1904; Zwischenspiel, *1904*, 1905 (translated as Intermezzo, 1915); Zum grossen Wurstel (one act), *1904*, 1906; Der Ruf des Lebens, *1905*, 1906; Dämmerseelen, *1907*, 1908; Komtesse Mizzi, oder das Familientag, *1909*, 1909 (translated as Countess Mizzie, 1915); Der junge Medardus, *1909*, 1910; Das weite Land, *1910*, 1911; Professor Bernhardi, *1912*, 1912; Frau Beate und ihr Sohn, *1913*, 1913; Die Schwestern, *1918*. In addition, Schnitzler has written two comic operas, Der tapfere Cassian, *1909*, and Der Schleier der Pierrette, *1909*. Schnitzler's Collected Works were issued in Berlin, 1912.

HERMANN BAHR, born in Linz, Austria, July 19, 1863; educated at Vienna and Berlin; director Free Theater, Berlin, 1890; founded *Die Zeit*, a weekly magazine in 1892; later connected with Wiener *Tageblatt*, and the Austrian *Volks Zeitung*; director of the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. Plays: Die neuen Menschen, *1887;* La Marquesa d'Amaequi, *1888;* Die grosse Sünde, *1889;* Die häusliche Frau, *1893;* Dora, *1893;* Aus der Vorstadt, *1893;* Die Nixe (from the Russian), *1896;* Juana, *1896;* Die Tschaperl, *1899;* Josephine, *1899;* Der Star, *1899;* Der Athlet, *1899;* Wienerinnen, *1900;* Der Franzl, *1900;* Der Apostel, *1901;* Der Krampus, *1901;* Der Meister, *1903* (translated as The Master, *1918*); Unter Sich, *1903;* Sanna, *1904;* Der Klub der Erlöser, *1905;* Der Andere, *1905;* Der arme Narr (one act), *1905* (translated as The Poor Fool, *1917*); Ringelspiel, *1907*, 1907; Die gelbe Nachtigall, *1909;* Das Konzert, *1909* (translated as The Concert, *1910*); Die Kinder, 1910; Das Tänzchen, *1911;* Das Prinzip, *1912;* Das Phantom, *1913*, 1913; Der Querulant, *1914;* Der muntre Seifensieder, *1915;* Die Stimme, *1917*.

GABRIELE D' ANNUNZIO, born in Pescara (Abruzzi) in 1864; poet, novelist, and dramatist. Plays: La parabola delle vergini fatue e delle vergini prudenti, 1897; La parabola del' uomo ricco e del povero Lazaro, 1898; La parabola del figliuol prodigo, *1898;* Il sogno d' un mattino di primavera, 1898 (translated as A Dream of a Spring Morning, 1902); Il sogno d' un tramonto d' autunno, 1898 (translated as A Dream of an Autumn Sunset, 1904); La città morta, 1898 (translated as The Dead City, 1900); La Gioconda, *1898*, 1898 (translated as Gioconda, 1901); La Gloria, *1899*, 1899; Francesca da Rimini, *1901*, 1901 (translated 1902); La Figlia di Jorio, *1904*, 1904 (translated as The Daughter of Jorio, 1907); La fiaccola sotto il moggio, 1905; Più che l' amore, 1907; La nave, 1908 (translated as The Ship, 1909); Fedra, 1909; Le martyre de Saint Sébastien, 1911 (written in French and translated into Italian same year); La Pisanelle, 1913 (written in French and translated into Italian, 1914); Parisina, 1913; La chevrefeuille, 1913 (written in French, translated into Italian as Il ferro; translated into English as The Honeysuckle, 1915); Cabiria, *1914* (for cinematograph); Amaranta, *1914;* La Piave, 1918.

JACINTO BENAVENTE, born at Madrid, August 12, 1866; educated at the University of Madrid, and studied law; his first volume of Poems was published in 1893, followed in 1894 by his first play. His produced dramatic works number 88, of which 52 are full-length plays, 26 plays in one act, 3 monologues, and 7 translations from the French, English, and Catalan. Besides these, 25 dramatic sketches in one act and a sequence of studies of Madrid life in six scenes have been published, making the total of his published dramatic works 114. Chief Plays: Gente conocida (In Society), *1894*, 1904; La comida de las fieras (The Banquet of Wild Beasts), *1898*, 1904; Cuento de amor (A Lover's Tale), *1899*, 1904; Lo cursi (The Taint of Vulgarity), *1901*, 1904; La gobernadora (The Governor's Wife), *1901*, 1904 (in English, *1920*, 1919); Amor de amar (Love of Loving), *1902*, 1904; La noche del sábado (Saturday Night), *1903*, 1904 (in English, 1918*); La Princesa Bebé (Princess Bebé), *1909*, 1905 (in English, 1919); Rosas de otoño (Autumnal Roses), *1905*, 1905 (in English, 1919); Los malhechores del bien (The Evil-doers of Good), *1905*, 1905 (in English, 1917); Más fuerte que el amor (Stronger than Love), *1906*, 1906; El amor asusta (Love Shocks), *1907*, 1908; Los intereses creados (The Bonds of Interest), *1907*, 1908 (in English, *1919*, 1917); Señora Ama, *1908*, 1909; El marido de su viuda (His Widow's Husband), *1908*, 1909 (in English, *1917*, 1917); La fuerza bruta (Brute Force), *1908*, 1909; Por las nubes (In the Clouds), *1909*, 1909; La escuela de las princesas (The School of Princesses), *1909*, 1910; El príncipe que todo lo aprendió en los libros (The Prince Who Learned Everything Out of Books), *1909*, 1910 (in English, 1918*); La losa de los sueños (The Graveyard of Dreams), *1911*, 1914; La malquerida (The Ill-beloved), *1913*, 1914 (translated and performed as The Passion Flower, *1920*, 1917); La propia estimación (His Proper Self), *1915*, 1916; Campo de armiño (Field of Ermine), *1916*, 1916; La ciudad alegre y confiada (The City of Gaiety and Confidence),

2d part of Los intereses creados, *1916*, 1916; La Inmaculada de los Dolores (Our Lady of Sorrows), *1918*, 1918; La ley de los hijos (The Law of the Children), *1918*, 1919; La vestal de occidente (The Vestal of the West), *1919*, 1920; La Cenicienta (Cinderella), *1919*, 1920; Y va de cuento (Once Upon a Time), *1919;* Una señora (A Lady), *1920*, 1920; Una pobre mujer (A Poor Woman), *1920*, 1920. To the above list should be added El nido ajeno (Thy Brother's House), *1894*, 1904, and the farcical sketch No fumadores (No Smoking), published and performed in English, *1919*, 1919. Benavente has composed broad farce and melodrama, as well as libretti for operettas and zarzuelas, titles of which are omitted here. Except where indicated by a *, the dates not underscored above are those of publication in the collected library editions, whether Spanish or English.

MAXIM GORKI (ALICKSEI MAXIMOVITCH PIESHKOV), born March 14, 1868, has been at various times peddler of kvass, scullery boy, gardener, baker's apprentice, novelist, and playwright. Plays: The Middle Class, *1901*, 1903 (translated as The Smug Citizen, 1906); The Lower Depths, *1902*, 1903 (translated into English under various titles, A Lodging for a Night, A Night Refuge, Submerged, The Lower Depths); Summer Folk, *1903*, 1904 (translated into English under this title, 1905); The Children of the Sun, *1905*, 1905 (translated under this title, 1906); Barbarians, *1905*, 1906; Enemies, *1906*, 1906; The Last Ones, 1908; Odd Folk, *1910*, 1910; Vassa Zheleznova, 1910; Children, 1910; The Meeting, 1910; The Zykovs, 1914. In addition, adaptations of Gorki's tales have been made for the stage as follows: Foma Gordeyev and Mayakin, *1901;* Foma Gordeyev, *1901;* The Three, *1911;* Malva, *1911*.

GUNNAR HEIBERG, born November 18, 1857, at Christiania, Norway; studied stage technique at the principal European theaters; stage director Bergen National Theater, 1884–88. Plays: Tante Ulrikke, 1884 (Aunt Ukricke); Kong Midas, *1890* (King Midas); Kunstnere, 1893 (Artists); Balkonen, 1894 (The Balcony); Gerts Have, 1894 (The Garden of Gert); Det store Lod, 1895 (The Great Prize); Folkeraadet, 1897 (The People's Council); Harald Svans Mor, 1899 (Harald Swan's Mother); Kjaerlighed til Naesten, *1902*, 1902 (Neighborly Love); Kjaerlighedens Tragedie, *1905*, 1904 (The Tragedy of Love); Jeg vil vaerge mit land, 1912 (My Life for My Country); Paradesengen, 1913 (The Parade Bed).

II. NOTES ON THE PRODUCTION OF PLAYS

MILESTONES, by Arnold Bennett and Edward Knoblock, was first presented at the Royalty Theater, London, March 5, 1912, by Messrs. Vedrenne and Eadie, with Mr. Dennis Eadie in the part of John Rhead, Miss Haidee Wright as Gertrude Rhead, Miss Mary Jerrold as Rose Sibley, Hubert Harben as Sam Sibley, Owen Nares as Lord Monkhurst, and Evelyn Weedon as Emily Rhead. Running for more than a year, the play was repeated in November, 1914. The first American production was made at the Liberty Theater, New York, September 17, 1912.

OUR BETTERS, by William Somerset Maugham, was produced by John D. Williams at the Hudson Theater, New York, March 12, 1917, Chrystal Herne playing Lady Grayston; Rose Coghlan, the Duchesse de Surennes; John Flood, Arthur Fenwick; and Diantha Pattison, Elizabeth Saunders. The play has not before been published.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, by John Drinkwater, was first presented at the Repertory Theater, Birmingham, October 12, 1918. By Nigel Playfair and Arnold Bennett the play was taken to the Lyric Theater, London, February 19, 1919, the rôle of Lincoln being in the hands of the Irish actor, William J. Rea; played throughout the year and on tour with Herbert Lomax in the title rôle. The first New York production was made under the direction of William Harris, at the Cort Theater, on December 15, 1919, with Frank McGlynn in the title rôle.

MIXED MARRIAGE, by St. John Ervine, was first performed at the Abbey Theater, Dublin, on March 30, 1911, in a production by Lennox Robinson. The play was produced by the same players at the Court Theater, London, in June, 1911, and again in 1912. It was produced at Maxine Elliott's Theater, New York, on December 11, 1911, by the Irish Theater Company, with Arthur Sinclair, Sara Allgood, U. Wright, Cathleen Nesbitt, J. M. Kerrigan, and J. A. O'Rourke, and was again played by the Irish Players on tour in the United States in 1913. The play was again produced in New York in 1920.

KING ARGIMENES AND THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR, by Lord Dunsany, was produced under direction of Mr. Nugent Monck at the Abbey Theater, Dublin, January 26, 1911. The first American production was made by Stuart Walker in his Portmanteau Theater at New York, December 18, 1916. The play has been variously performed by Little Theaters in England and America.

THE EASIEST WAY, by Eugene Walter, had its first public performance in the Hartford Opera House, Hartford, Connecticut, December 31, 1908. The first performance in New York was made under direction of David Belasco in the Belasco-Stuyvesant Theater, January 19, 1909, with Edward H. Robins in the part of John Madison, Joseph Kilgour as Willard Brockton, William Sampson as Jim Weston, Frances Starr as Laura Murdock, Laura Nelson Hall as Effie St. Clair, and Emma Dunn as Annie. The Easiest Way was repeated in New York in the spring of 1911. The first London production was given at the Globe and Queen's Theaters, London, in February and March, 1912. The play has not before been published.

THE PIPER, by Josephine Preston Peabody, was, in March, 1910, awarded the first prize from among fifteen hundred plays submitted as the best play to open the Shakespeare Memorial Theater at Stratford-on-Avon. It was produced at this theater by F. R. Benson in the same year, and at the St. James Theater, London, in 1911. The first American production was made at the New Theater, New York, January 30, 1911, with Edith Wynne Matthison in the part of The Piper. Frank Gilmore as Michael, Jacob Wendell, Jr., as Cheat-the-Devil, Ben Johnson as Kurt, Pedro de Cordoba as Anselm, Cecil Yapp as Old Claus, and Olive Oliver as Veronika.

THE YELLOW JACKET, a Chinese play done in a Chinese manner, by George C. Hazelton and Benrimo, was first produced in a matinée at the Fulton Theater, New York, November 4, 1912, by William Harris, Jr., and Edgar Selwyn, managers, with Arthur Shaw as Property Man (the part later assumed by Thomas E. Jackson), Signor Perugini as Chorus, George Relph as Wu Hoo Git, Schuyler Ladd as Wu Fah Din (Daffodil), Antoinette Walker as Chow Wan, Juliette Day as Moy Fah Loy (Plum Blossom), Reginald Barlow as Tai Fah Min, and Mark Price as Git Hok Gar. Music was provided by William Furst. The play was later seen on tour. A later American production was made by Mr. and Mrs. Coburn on November 9, 1916, at the Cort Theater, New York and was moved to the Harris Theater December 25 of the same year. Various foreign productions have been made. The play opened at the Duke of York's Theater, London, March

27, 1913. March 30, 1914, it was presented at Berlin by Max Reinhardt at the Kammerspiele Theater, and he later presented the play at Munich, Vienna, and Budapest. In Russia the play was given under the direction of Stanislavski at the Moscow Art Theater. On April 23, 1916, a distinguished adaptation of the play, by Jacinto Benavente, was given at Madrid.

A LOVING WIFE (L'AMOUREUSE), by Georges de Porto-Riche, was given for the first time at the Odéon, Paris, April 25, 1891. It was repeated at this theater and also was seen in the Vaudeville in 1896, 1898, and 1899, again seen at the Renaissance in 1904, and finally came to the stage of the Comédie-Française June 5, 1908, in the repertoire of which theater it has remained one of the most popular plays. Until it came to the Comédie-Française, the part of Étienne was most frequently taken by M. Lucien Guitry, the part of Germaine by Réjane. At the Comédie the part of Étienne has been taken by M. Grand. The play has not before been translated into English.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC, by Edmond Rostand, was produced December 28, 1897, at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin, with Constant Coquelin in the title rôle and the part of Roxane played by Mlle. Legault, an event comparable in réclame, though hardly in historic importance, with the production of Hugo's Hernani almost seventy years before. Contrary to expectations, the production did not inaugurate a new movement in the theater, the play remaining isolated as the single highly distinguished representative of its type. The play was early seen on the stages of all the countries of Europe. In French it was played in London in 1899 by Coquelin and Bernhardt, and by the same players in New York in 1900. Various translations have been made into English, by Gertrude Hall, Gladys Thomas, and M. F. Guillemand, Charles Renauld, Helen B. Dole, and others. As adapted by Howard Thayer Kingsbury, the play was presented at the Garden Theater, New York, October 3, 1898, with Richard Mansfield in the title rôle and with Margaret Anglin as Roxane. The same night Augustin Daly produced another version of the play, with Ada Rehan in the part of Roxane. Mansfield's production was highly successful, and he continued in the play throughout practically two seasons. A recent adaptation was played by Robert Lorraine in London in 1919.

PASTEUR, by Sacha Guitry, was presented for the first time at the Théâtre du Vaudeville, Paris, January 25, 1919. The part of Louis Pasteur was taken by M. Lucien Guitry, the father of the author, for whom the play was written. The play has not before been translated into English.

MORAL, by Ludwig Thoma, was first produced at the Kleines Theater, Berlin, in 1908. It was produced in German at the Irving Place Theater, New York, in April, 1914.

LIVING HOURS (LEBENDIGE STUNDEN), by Arthur Schnitzler, has frequently been seen, either alone or in company with the three other short plays included under this title in the published edition, in the theaters of Austria and Germany.

THE CONCERT (DAS KONZERT), by Hermann Bahr, was first presented at the Lessing Theater, Berlin, in 1909. Thereafter it was a favorite in Vienna and Munich. In German the play was presented at the Bandbox Theater in New York in June, 1916. The American production, in an adaptation by Leo Ditrichstein, with the adapter in the leading rôle, was made at the Belasco Theater, October 4, 1910, Janet Beecher playing the wife, and the other leading rôles being taken by William Morris and Jane Grey. In this adaptation the names of the original characters were changed. The play was repeated in New York in 1918. It was produced at the Duke of York's Theater, London, 1911.

LA GIOCONDA, by Gabriele d' Annunzio, was first produced in 1898 in Rome, with Duse in the leading rôle. As rendered by the same actress, the play was seen in Paris and London in 1900 and in New York in 1902. A few performances were given in French in New York in 1914.

THE BONDS OF INTEREST, by Jacinto Benavente, was first presented at the Teatro Lara, Madrid, Spain, December 9, 1907, and has been seen in various European countries. The present translation, made by John Garrett Underhill, was produced by the Theater Guild in New York in 1919, and at the Everyman Theater in London in September, 1920.

THE LOWER DEPTHS, by Maxim Gorki, was first produced at the Moscow Art Theater, December 18, 1902 (Russian style), with Moskvin and Kachalov in the chief rôles. The play has been produced in almost all the countries of the civilized world, including a production in Japan in 1912. It continues to be produced in Moscow and Petrograd. In a German version entitled Nachtasyl, it was produced at the Irving Place Theater, New York, as early as 1902 and as recently as 1918. The play was presented by Arthur Hopkins in New York in December, 1919. Various translations of the play have been made under various titles. Literally translated, the Russian title means "at the bottom."

THE TRAGEDY OF LOVE, by Gunnar Heiberg, had its first performance on January 16, 1905, at the National Theater, Christiania, with Fru Johanna Dybwad (Norway's foremost actress) as Karen, Egil Eide as Hadeln, and Nicolai Halvorsen as Erling. Later it was played twenty-one times in other Norwegian cities, with the same cast. It was revived in 1908 and again in 1917–18. In the fall of 1918 the play was produced at the Betty Nansen Theater, Copenhagen, with Fru Nansen as Karen. It has also been played with success in Germany and Russia.

III. A WORKING BOOK LIST IN CONTEMPORARY DRAMA

The following book list is offered for the convenience of the student and the general reader. While it offers a comprehensive survey of the critical literature of the recent theater there has been no wish to make it an exhaustive bibliography.

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Freiherr General Botho von Schmettau, also known as Zurnberg, a Gentleman-in-waiting and Adjutant to His Highness, the Duke. *Moral.*
William Scott. *Abraham Lincoln.*
The Secretary. *The Bonds of Interest.*
See Noi (Nurse), in charge of Plum Blossom. *The Yellow Jacket.*
See Quoe Fah (Four-Season Flower). *The Yellow Jacket.*
The Servant of the King's Dog. *King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior.*
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Nancy Sibley. *Milestones.*
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Assessor Oscar Stroebel, a police official. *Moral.*
Suey Sin Fah (Lily Flower), wife of Lee Sin and maid of the first wife, Chee Moo. *The Yellow Jacket.*
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Yong Soo Kow (Hydrangea). *The Yellow Jacket.*

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